WHY J.D. SALINGER CAN'T WRITE
DAVID SKINNER

the weekly Standard

FEBRUARY 22, 1999 $3.50

A SYMPOSIUM

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Monica Speaks!

On Feb. 4, the deputy assistant to the president for ooze, Gregory Craig, begged the Senate not to include videotaped deposition testimony in the formal record of the Clinton impeachment trial. Why? Well, he was concerned about the nation's children, of course. Should "hour after hour" of Monica Lewinsky, Vernon Jordan, and—gasp!—Sidney Blumenthal be inserted "irreversibly" into "the living rooms and family rooms of the nation," he wondered?

True to form, the Senate, which is controlled by Republicans, and therefore cares nothing for children, went ahead and authorized partial release of these videotapes, anyway. And somehow the nation and its children survived.

But how much more fun the nation would have had if the entire depositions had been broadcast, instead of the snippets chosen sequentially by the House managers and Clinton's lawyers.

According to the fuller transcripts printed in the Congressional Record, for example, during her Feb. 1 deposition, Monica Lewinsky refused to say flat-out that the president is lying when he claims never to have touched her in ways that fall within the definition of "sexual relations" at issue in the Paula Jones civil suit. Why did she do that? "Because there is a portion of that definition that says, you know, 'with intent,' and I don't feel comfortable characterizing what someone's intent was."

Lewinsky was referring here to the "intent to gratify." It appears the young woman is no longer sure Bill Clinton had any interest in her pleasure whatsoever. The Scrapbook can't say it blames her.

Shortly after this darkly comic exchange, the House managers proposed a break for lunch, and Lewinsky jumped at the chance: "I never object to food." And when the deposition reconvened, she finally said something genuinely important—which has somehow escaped the notice of America's superprofessional journalism school graduates. On Dec. 31, 1997, Lewinsky met Vernon Jordan for a breakfast he first denied ever attending—but now claims to remember in some detail. When they were done eating, Jordan gave her a ride in his limousine.

While she was in the car with Jordan, Rep. Ed Bryant asked Lewinsky at her deposition, "Did you tell him that you had had an affair with the president?"

"Yes," Lewinsky answered.

She hadn't ever testified to that before. It means that Vernon Jordan continued to pursue an out-of-town job for Lewinsky—after he knew for sure she was under subpoena, after he knew for sure she was Bill Clinton's mistress, and after he knew for sure that the president had lied to him about that.

And now the president has been acquitted. Mission accomplished.

Terms of Endearment

"Dishonorable," "contemptible," "shameful," "boorish," "inexcusable," "sordid," "deplorable," "immoral," "reckless," "disgraceful," "debased," "reprehensible," and "outrageous."

These are just a few of the words the Senate's Democrats used last week to describe the behavior of Bill Clinton—behavior every last one of them, voting to acquit, apparently believes perfectly consistent with the powers and prerogatives of the American presidency. Such a man, the Democratic party concludes, is a worthy president. It is a party, The Scrapbook sadly concludes, without true patriots.

Worse, though, were the announcements last week of two Republican senators. "If I were a juror in a standard criminal case," said Olympia Snowe of Maine, "I would vote to convict him" of obstruction of justice. Jim Jeffords of Vermont agreed: "It is my belief that President Clinton gave misleading statements" and that "President Clinton did obstruct justice."

Snowe and Jeffords both voted to acquit. A man can and should remain president, they have determined, even after it's proved he is a felon. Happy Washington and Lincoln's birthdays.

Who Is Harold Evans?

"Do you know Mr. Harry Evans?" Rep. Lindsey Graham suddenly asked Sidney Blumenthal at his Feb. 3 deposition. This was rather like asking whether teenage girls know Leonardo DiCaprio; Blumenthal is a major-league fixture of fashion-magazine intellectualism and used to work for Mrs. Evans at the *New Yorker*, so of course he knows the Queen's lesser half, Prince Harry. The Scrapbook is betting that Sidney rolled his beady little eyes with disgust when he said, "Yes, I do," in response to Graham's hopelessly out-of-it inquiry.

But Graham persisted. "Who is Mr. Harold Evans?" he wanted to know. And just as Sid was getting warmed up to the subject, his White House colleague, Lanny Breuer, registered a strenuous objection to "this line of

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questioning"—as "well beyond" the appropriate scope of the deposition. "I have never heard of Mr. Harold Evans," Breuer complained.

Oh, dear. Cancel Lanny's table at Elaine's; he won't be coming. And neither, it seems, will Senators Arlen Specter and John Edwards, who supervised the Blumenthal deposition. On Breuer's objection, they both demanded an "offer of proof" from Lindsey Graham that this so-called "Harold Evans" might be an even remotely significant character.

No wonder so much of Washington hates Sidney Blumenthal. Turns out it's a city full of rubes.

Just an Allusion

Last week may have been bad for conservatives, but it sure was good for the canon. Lawyers, lackeys, and cronies on all sides mined their liberal arts educations for a touch of eloquence in the closing speeches of the Clinton trial. Allan Bloom must be smiling somewhere.

White House partisans, as if through a central committee, leaned heavily on 19th-century novelists (Hugo, Dickens, Conan Doyle), the most often cited work being Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Somewhere a memo (cc: Nicole Seligman, Dale Bumpers) must recommend comparing Ken Starr to Inspector Javert. This allusion of course casts the president as Jean Valjean, a poor man imprisoned and persecuted his entire life for stealing bread to feed his starving family—which, come to think of it, is pretty close to the official White House line.

There was also active trading in the anti-totalitarian classics. Sidney Blumenthal's now famous retelling of the conversation in which the president compared himself to Rubashov in Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* sounds typically self-serving, but otherwise off-key. For one thing, it would cast Henry Hyde as Stalin, and would mean that the president was being pursued for . . . right-wing deviationism? Finishing-school dean Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* flogged House manager James Rogan for not having been a thorough enough prosecutor to read the Koestler book. But, making the generous assumption that Blumenthal was telling the truth, surely the president meant to tell his court intellectual that he felt like a character in Kafka's *The Trial*. In any event, given Koestler's recent exposure as an abuser of women, it's doubtful we will be hearing any more references to him from this White House.

Republicans, in general, favored Shakespeare's moral vision. "Fair is foul and foul is fair," said William Bennett; Pete Domenici did not acquit himself quite so nobly on *Meet the Press*: "Oh what a tangled web we have, when first we practice to deceive," quoth the senator. Henry Hyde, though, outdid them all with his closing remarks, which made good use of the St. Crispin's speech from *Henry V*: "For he that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother."

The only classicists, judging by the closing remarks, were Hyde and White House counsel Charles F.C. Ruff. Ruff made a short nod to Diogenes, the Greek founder of cynicism who was said to carry a lamp around even in the daytime in search of one honest man. Ruff was speaking of the Republicans in their search for a good witness but perhaps subconsciously describing the job of White House counsel under Bill Clinton. Hyde, though, saw Ruff's Diogenes and raised him one, quoting a magnificent passage from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* to describe the president: "Severus promised, only to betray; he flattered only to ruin; and however he might occasionally bind himself by oaths and treaties, his conscience, obsequious to his interest, always released him from the inconvenient obligation."

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Casual

FUTURE SHOCK

I was sitting in the Senate press gallery last Monday afternoon, waiting for the final day of the impeachment trial to begin, when suddenly the future became real to me—the pall of the post-Lewinsky world. Before me lay a copy of *Congress Daily*, an indispensable, exhaustively reported, excruciatingly boring chronicle of congressional goings-on. "Auto Choice Revs Up for Comeback," read the headline, followed by this lead sentence: "Buckle up, because 'auto choice' is headed back down the legislative pike."

I don't know which depressed me more: the thought of writing about auto insurance reform, or the thought of a writer trying to make auto insurance reform interesting by using seat-belt metaphors. But this is the future that awaits political writers, as the Lewinsky scandal becomes merely the stuff of our pleasant but fading recollection. Auto insurance reform. Nuclear waste clean-up legislation. Financial services modernization. Up next: the reallocation of oversight responsibility for motor carrier safety from the Office of Motor Carriers to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Vroom, vroom.

So it was with a great deal of regret that my colleagues and I filed into the press seats for this final show last Monday. Never again would we see all one hundred senators arrayed silently before us—at least not until the impeachment trial of President George W. Bush a few years from now, and by then the composition of the Senate will have changed. (Strom Thurmond, to take an obvious example, will be dead.) The senators have come to be deeply familiar to those of us who sit in the gallery and stare down at them for hours every day. From my perch directly above him, I can close my eyes and count the number of strands in Chuck Schumer's comb-over. (Eleven.) And when he grabs one of the many candy bars he keeps in his desk drawer, and his face darkens, and he hungrily rips the foil wrapper, I know without looking how many chews there will be before swallowing. (One.) And I know he'll eat all the Hershey bars before he starts working his way through the Kit Kat. And when he's sated, I know which finger he will use to pick his teeth. (Pinky.) It's like we're married or something.

Maybe this doesn't sound exciting to you—maybe you think that you'd rather write about auto insurance reform any day than watch Chuck Schumer snack. But in truth, the sort of intimacy I'm describing with the great and powerful is rarely granted to a political reporter. I could trail Bob Kerrey for a month and never get to see him as I've seen him at his desk these past few weeks, hunched over a large bound notebook, filling page after page in an intense, tiny scribble, raising his head only occasionally to catch a bit of testimony or to sweep aside some flakes of chocolate that have flown over from Chuck Schumer next door. I admire Kerrey very much, but it must be said that this notebook of his has all the signs of a crazy man's epic work—like a six-million-word "History of Me" the coroner might discover under the bed of a deceased eccentric who hasn't stepped outside in twenty years. Kerrey does not observe margins, for example. He covers each page to its edge, from top to bottom. Sometimes he starts writing up the side. On some pages he's pasted mysterious clippings. I called his office the other day to see if I could find out what gives with the notebook, as any competent reporter would. Surely it's a hidden key to his inner life. But the press guy never called me back. And I'm not sure I want to know.

In their closing statements, the House managers were effusive in their praise of the senators' attentiveness. This was shinola, however. After the first week of six-hour days, discipline started to break down. By last Monday, senators roamed the aisles freely, exchanging pleasantries instead of sitting quietly as the lawyers droned. For much of the afternoon, Joe Biden insisted on leaning against the back wall, arms folded, head cocked, weight shifting from foot to foot, like a juvenile delinquent in *West Side Story*. He looked as though he was just daring the chief justice to ask him to sit down. "I'm just hangin'," Biden might have hissed. "You got a problem with that, Baldy?"

And then it was over. The closing statements concluded, the chief justice left, and only the final vote, at the end of the week, remained. Monica was history. *History* was history. Some senators stood to introduce legislation. The clerk read: "S. 387. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code to provide an exclusion from gross income for distributions from qualified state tuition programs . . . " and I came away, shuddering at the future.

ANDREW FERGUSON

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Issues in Health Care

#1 in a series

Think we spend too much on pharmaceuticals? Think again.

by Alan F. Holmer

"How do we contain rising prescription drug costs?"

This question is being asked in board rooms, editorial columns, state legislatures and in Congress. Unfortunately, it's the wrong question. And since we're asking the wrong question, the answers we're getting are wrong, too.

By focusing narrowly on the cost of prescription drugs and ignoring their value — to patients, to the health care system, to the economy — we're in danger of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. For example, some state legislatures are cutting budgets for Medicaid drug programs, and restricting the access of Medicaid patients to medicines that could keep them out of hospitals and emergency rooms. Some managed care groups are steering patients away from innovative medicines that could get them back to work faster, and toward older, less effective drugs. Congress and some states are considering legislation that would slap price controls on 40 percent of the prescription drug market — which could mean fewer breakthroughs in the future.

A growing body of evidence suggests that, for many diseases, increased use of medicines helps contain overall health care costs while improving patients' quality of life. Ulcer medicines, for example, actually reduce treatment costs by replacing the more expensive alternative — surgery. Others, such as innovative schizophrenia medicines, allow patients to be treated more cost-effectively in the community rather than in more costly hospital settings; asthma medicines save money by reducing the frequency and severity of illness, resulting in fewer hospitalizations and trips to the emergency room; antidepressants and drugs for migraine headaches reduce the indirect costs of illness by lowering absenteeism and improving worker productivity. Many more drugs, such as vaccines and high blood pressure medicines, prevent illnesses from developing in the first place.

By focusing narrowly on the cost of prescription drugs and ignoring their value...we're in danger of being penny-wise and pound-foolish.

Here are three examples of how the greater use of cost-effective medicines could save money as well as lives:

A recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that giving ACE inhibitor drugs to patients with congestive heart failure reduced the death rate by 16 percent and saved nearly $9,000 per patient in hospital costs. Considering the number of people at risk for congestive heart failure, additional use of these drugs could save an estimated $2 billion each year.

Another type of heart drug called a beta-blocker has been shown to reduce deaths in heart attack patients and to save hospitalization costs by preventing second heart attacks. Yet, a recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that these drugs are being prescribed for only half the people who could benefit from them.

Additional spending on a clot-busting drug for stroke patients could yield enormous savings — both in human suffering and in health care dollars. The drug, when used within the first three hours of the onset of a stroke, has been shown to reduce the danger of permanent brain damage. This not only improves the quality of life for patients — it also saves money. The drug costs an additional $1,700 per patient, but a recent study showed that reduced rehabilitation and nursing home stays saved an average of $6,100 per patient. According to the National Institutes of Health, by using the drug tens of thousands of eligible stroke patients could save the health care system more than $100 million a year.

Pharmaceutical research is yielding next-generation drugs that are more powerful and precise than existing medicines, and new drugs that offer hope to millions of patients with illnesses that have eluded medical science — epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's and others. America's pharmaceutical companies spend billions of dollars each year — $24 billion in 1999 alone — to discover new and improved treatments. But today's progress in treating disease and tomorrow's promise for cures are only possible when the legislative environment favors pharmaceutical innovation. It would be tragic if too much emphasis on the cost — rather than on the value — of medicines spoiled this pro-innovation environment and the progress that comes with it. Progress has a price, but the value of this progress is priceless.

Once we understand the value of state-of-the-art medicines for today's patients and the promise pharmaceutical research offers for tomorrow's, maybe we'll start asking the right question:

"How can we afford not to spend more on prescription drugs?"

PhRMA

Alan F. Holmer is President of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, which represents the country's leading research-based pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies.

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Great Gotham

Fred Siegel's review of our book *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* is generous and insightful, but it includes some puzzling assertions ("New York, New York," Feb. 8). He claims we overstate the importance of nineteenth-century class divisions, as rich and poor alike simply wanted to "better themselves." True enough, but in those days they had dramatically different visions about what "betterment" was and how to go about achieving it. Immigrant entrepreneurialism (to which we pay considerable attention) was certainly part of the story. But in general we found the working class opting for collective "social mobilization" rather than individual "social mobility"—via such vehicles as labor unions, radical political parties, ethnic associations, Tammany Hall, and the Catholic Church.

Siegel chastises us for implying a perduring existence of class divisions, which have supposedly been overcome by "social mobility." Indeed, he finds our recounting of Irish Catholics' radicalism in the mid-nineteenth century somehow undercut by their great-grandchildren's having become conservative in the mid-twentieth century, an oddly anachronistic argument coming from such an astute historian. In fact, New York has not witnessed the end of class—Siegel himself makes reference to today's "dangerous classes"—but rather has experienced yet another recomposition of its class ensemble.

Siegel suggests that contemporary class disorder is to some degree a function of New York's declining attention to infrastructure creation. He hails Abram Hewitt's defeat of Henry George in 1886 as a defining municipal moment, because Hewitt-backed public works helped create a booming economy, which in turn allowed immigrants to make their "fabled journey up into the middle class." By mourning George's defeat, Burrows and I (he says) "lose [this] larger picture." But George was as far-sighted as Hewitt about the need for infrastructure; he just wanted it organized differently, and its benefits distributed more equitably. George proposed, for example, that rapid transit be built, owned, and run by the city itself, that people be allowed to ride free, and that expenses be covered by taxing profits unfairly garnered by speculative real-estate interests.

As to our current predicament, I quite agree with Siegel about the need for new maritime infrastructure in order to resuscitate New York's commerce and manufacturing and provide jobs for the many unemployed. I'm a bit unclear as to how—given his general political perspective—he can in good conscience call for massive government intervention in the economy, with the attendant increases in taxes that would inevitably follow. But I stand shoulder to shoulder with him in applauding such initiatives.

Mike Wallace
New York, NY

The Doctor Is In

I can't remember ever reading a "book review" that dedicated so much space to repeating third-party gossip about the author before getting to the ostensible subject, the book itself—the point being, I guess, to justify Norah Vincent's contention that "there's not a line in the book worth quoting" ("Paper Tablets," Jan. 25).

The Ten Commandments: The Significance of God's Love in Everyday Life by Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Rabbi Stewart Vogel has been the subject of a PBS special and on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for 20 weeks. It is in its fourth printing. Considering that Vincent classifies the book as "Morality for Dummies," there must be a lot of them out there.

This disdain for Dr. Laura's millions of listeners is really the point of the review, which also calls them a "profound embarrassment." Vincent cites *Vanity Fair* as her authoritative source on Dr. Laura; she even mentions the reporter, Leslie Bennetts. Vincent uses the same unsubstantiated allegations that appeared in the *Vanity Fair* story on Dr. Laura—allegations by a "close friend," who, in reality, was a casual acquaintance whom Dr. Laura hadn't seen in seven years. Those allegations were contradicted by four or five other people interviewed, who were never quoted.

Now, however, thanks to The Weekly Standard's giving Vincent space to repeat those false allegations in the guise of a book review, they continue to circulate. Shame on you.

Keven Bellows
Vice President/General Manager
The Dr. Laura Schlessinger Program
Sherman Oaks, CA

Laura Schlessinger deserves better treatment than she received at the hands of Norah Vincent.

Vincent criticizes Schlessinger for the "thinness of her moral and religious imagination." I disagree. Judging from her radio broadcasts and appearances on public television, Schlessinger's moral and religious understanding is neither thin nor, for that matter, flabby—it is, rather, robust and disciplined. Her bluntness in exhorting people to live up to their moral responsibilities undoubtedly puts some people off, but there is nothing "off" about her understanding of what reason and revelation tell us people's moral obligations are.

Vincent really hits the skids in accusing Schlessinger of "spotting a hunger in America for moral discourse and deciding to feed it, instead of coming to certain moral conclusions and then turning back to help people." The very reverse is true. By her own account, Schlessinger led most of her life as a religious skeptic and (not unrelatedly) a moral-political liberal. In those years, she believed (as such people often do) that she was entitled to "make up the moral rules" to fit her own personal "lifestyle preferences." (Hence,

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her willingness to pose for the now infamous nude photographs.) It was when she came to her senses about the need to acknowledge the God of the Bible and live in accordance with the divinely established moral order that she turned her talents to helping others discover (or rediscover) the same truths.

Schlessinger deserves particular praise for her uncompromising and courageous witness to the sanctity of marriage and the dignity of unborn human life. Urging late-twentieth-century Americans not to "shack up" or "suck their babies down a sink" is hardly the equivalent in moral advice of "tofu burgers." An "embarrassment" she may be to people who blush at plain speaking about basic moral truths, but such people are not made to blush often enough these days.

ROBERT P. GEORGE
PRINCETON, NJ

POP GOES THE CANON

Paul Cantor scores an important point in revealing W.J.T. Mitchell's contempt for popular culture in *The Last Dinosaur Book* ("Jurassic Marx," Jan. 25). Buried in Cantor's review, however, is this contradictory nugget: Traditionalists are "outraged" when a professor stoops to writing about *Jurassic Park*. It should come as no surprise that traditionalists are just as contemptuous of popular culture as Mitchell. The fundamental premise of modern literary studies is that aesthetically superior "high art" must be distinguished from vulgar "low art." Conservatives believe the resulting literary canon supports their cause. They are wrong.

Read Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, and you find a Marxist tirade comparing Thomas Paine to Karl Marx, Lenin to Jefferson. Read *The Great Gatsby*, and you find that American prosperity flows not from creative entrepreneurs, but from criminal conduct. For that matter, Dickens was no fan of capitalism.

If conservatives condemn Cultural Studies as a radical wasteland, they should at least recognize the canon as a decidedly liberal enterprise. Conservatives should also recognize that both academic camps are mistaken about popular culture. Dickens, like Spielberg, was enormously popular in his day. So were Jane Austen, Shakespeare, and a host of others who wrote before the modernist elite branded monetary success as the root of all evil. A century from now, when the masses are no longer flocking to his movies, academics will recognize that Spielberg possessed a gift as rare as Shakespeare's.

PHILLIP MINK
NEWARK, DE

DOLLARS FOR TORTS

Matt Labash does a good job of pointing out the kind of conduct that has brought discredit to the law and lawyers ("Lawyers, Guns, and Money," Feb. 1). I was a charter member of the National Association of Claimant's Compensation Attorneys, which became the American Trial Lawyers Association. I resigned long ago. I knew Melvin Belli and Lee Bailey when they were getting started.

The original objective of tort law was to see that injured plaintiffs with valid claims were justly compensated. That goal has been lost in the morass of money. Class-action suits have become travesties, with the lawyers on both sides the big winners and the real parties at interest the losers. Unfortunately, the American Bar Association, from which I also resigned, is dominated by money and politics. When President Clinton lies, obstructs justice, and defies the law, but yet still has the support and commendation of organized trial lawyers, the future indeed looks bleak.

ALBERT MIMS WILKINSON JR.
DILLARD, GA

ON THE DOLE

Danielle Crittenden raises some valid concerns about the sea-worthiness of an Elizabeth Dole presidential candidacy ("Giddy for Liddy," Jan. 25). But, she neglects to point out that, after a long season of partisan bickering, high-level dissembling, and relentless waffling, Dole's apparent shortcomings could make her the best candidate of all.

So far, we know that Dole is in favor of safety, opposed to child labor, and handy around disasters. If she's a serious candidate, we'll soon learn that she's also opposed to crime, for education, and—let's hope—against immorality.

As a woman, beyond the "safe for family viewing" factor, Dole alone could stake out a Republican vision of feminism—where economic growth, respect for common values, and a lean, responsive government build an equality based on strength. And, while conservatives bristle at her "feminist" record, she may offer the best chance to shake the so-called "problem with women" that has plagued the GOP since Nixon.

Finally, Elizabeth Dole's sphinx-like strategy may be her best ally for the foreseeable future. Let voters project their hopes and aspirations onto her. Why muddy the waters with nasty policy debates now? After all, as polls continue to show, voter support has little to do with what the president does or thinks.

KRISTEN A. NELSON
CHEVY CHASE, MD

THE BIGGEST HYPOCRISY

Hypocrisy is the new scarlet letter in Washington, as Matt Labash points out ("Clinton's Hustler," Jan. 25). But Clinton apologists who hope to gum up the wheels of justice with sanctimonious Republicans have not considered the hypocrisy of having a felon as chief magistrate. Nor have they considered the long-term consequences of having a guilty president remain in office.

THOMAS M. BEATTIE
MT. VERNON, VA

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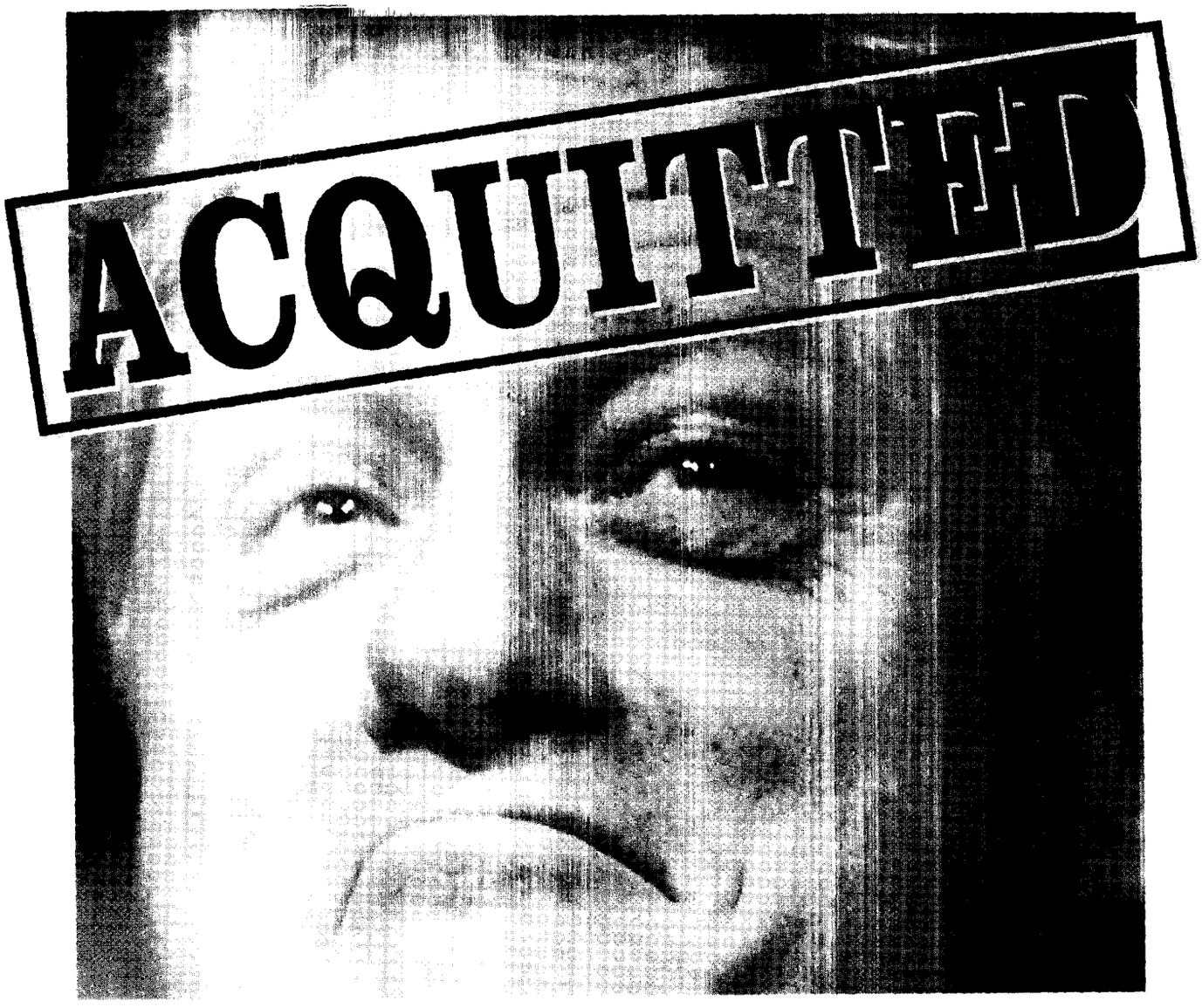

In light of the conclusion of the Senate trial of the president, the editors of THE WEEKLY STANDARD asked 22 writers, thinkers, and political actors the following questions: "President William Jefferson Clinton has been impeached and acquitted. What have we learned? What should we do now?"

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Democrats Held Hostage

ELLIOTT ABRAMS

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED from the acquittal of Bill Clinton is that the American people are more "disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed"—or by kicking out a president when the economy is strong. But we had reason to know that already.

We have also learned something surprising: A majority of Americans have bought the line that sexual behavior between (among?) consenting adults is beyond criticism. People don't seem to think that adultery is fine, but they do seem to think that no one may be criticized for engaging in it. As a large minority disagrees with this judgment, we can expect sexual morality to remain a matter of public debate and conflict in the coming years.

What are the political effects? The first relates to

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the president. Bill Clinton, already a lame duck, is unlikely to see his reputation improve after he leaves office, as Jimmy Carter did. Democrats will probably begin distancing themselves from the president and his behavior very soon and continue to do so after the next election. This process will accelerate if new revelations of misconduct arise, as they may. The Democrats are now hostage to Clinton's report card.

The second political effect relates to our public life, and here the news is bad. The expectation that citizens will be honest in the courts has been permanently damaged. The value of an oath has been undermined. The notion that public service requires men and women of good character now seems quaint.

The expectation that citizens will be honest in the courts has been badly damaged.

The third political effect relates to the Republican party. The Democrats are now linked in the public mind with the president's behavior. The GOP, once the defender of public morals against the sixties generation, is, well, once again the defender of public morals against the sixties generation, or at least those members of it now running the executive branch and the media. If the Republicans perform this role too zealously, they will be seen as scolds and hypocrites; if they shirk it, they will have ratified the Clinton standards. An appeal to voters to help restore the dignity and even glory of the presidency will fare well. There is a real opportunity here for Republicans. Many Americans share the view that something of value has been lost in our common life and that the Democrats lost it. These citizens are chary of leaders who proclaim their own virtue but eager for leaders who are virtuous.

This week the Democratic party and its president may seem to be winners. It won't last.

Elliott Abrams is president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

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Toward November 2000

JEFFREY BELL

THE ACQUITTAL OF BILL CLINTON is a stinging setback for conservatives in the values war that has been going on in one form or another since the 1960s. But to treat this defeat as climactic would be as big a mistake as pretending it isn't really a defeat.

As congressional Democrats and various Clinton apologists made clear in their frantic pursuit of a censure resolution, this is the kind of victory that is capable of turning to dust. Most liberals and Democrats, while far from repenting of their triumph, are well aware that they are not positioned securely and feel at least an occasional twinge of guilty fear. The economy, markets, and foreign conditions may not continue as benign as they are today.

Moreover, the history of Bill Clinton suggests that for him, no escape is ever final. In the personal and legal dimensions, he has lived all his life along a precipice, and he is unlikely to see this or any other installment of his scandal saga as a warning to pull back. He never has, at least not for very long. Who would really be surprised if the remaining two years of the Clinton presidency saw some new flirtation with the abyss?

By November 2000, the electorate will have arrived at some sort of bottom line on the Clinton presidency. If the bottom line is unfavorable, Al Gore (or any other Democratic nominee tied to Clinton) is unlikely to win. If the bottom line is favorable, Republican victory will be difficult but not out of the question. In 1960, at the end of the popular Eisenhower presidency, John F. Kennedy ran a near-perfect campaign and narrowly wrested the White House from the Republicans.

For conservatives, the challenge is to accept not just Clinton's acquittal, but his preemption of such key conservative goals as reductions in welfare and crime, full employment without inflation, and an end to deficits. Incumbent Republican governors of course benefit from these trends in their own states, but it is nonsense to think these successes could translate into a winning presidential strategy in 2000. Any "Republican" trend at the state level is easily trumped by a Clinton-Gore national trend in the same category. As Democrats ruefully learned in the 1980s, benign

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nationwide trends, in economics or anything else, get credited by voters above all to the party that occupies the White House. That the pro-Clinton trends of the 1990s can be seen, in policy terms, as mere extensions or resumptions of the pro-Reagan trends of the 1980s may be of interest to historians and political scientists, but matters not at all to voters, or to the political landscape of 2000.

Republicans and conservatives can of course sit back and hope for some kind of bad news, or even a wave of second thoughts, that could diminish the Clinton presidency in the next two years. But a party that was serious about taking charge of the national agenda would never be satisfied with this kind of passivity. Historically, parties that benefited from success stories on one set of issues, as is the case with the Democrats today, have lost their grip when the electorate moved on (or returned) to a different set of concerns. If the issue mix of 2000 is values-related, as it has so often been in presidential elections beginning in 1968, Republican victory is quite possible and, in ways that cannot be fully anticipated, defeat on impeachment might ultimately prove to be a building block of presidential victory. If Republicans tacitly repudiate impeachment and try to engage on "safe" issues that are in fact backward-looking and therefore easily preemptible by Clinton-Gore, they will have to be very lucky to win, and will have at most a trivial mandate if they do.

Jeffrey Bell, author of **Populism and Elitism**, *is senior consultant at Bauer for President 2000.*

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The Party of Constitutionalism

JAMES W. CEASER

THE JURY IS STILL OUT on last week's verdict, and the battle over the meaning of the impeachment and acquittal of William Jefferson Clinton has just begun.

No sane person could possibly wish to listen to even one more word about these events, least of all to any of the therapeutic expressions being heard this week about our need for "healing" or "closure." But however much some people would like to "move on," the issues will not go away. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Either the Clinton impeachment will be seen as justified and his conviction warranted, or the acquittal will be deemed right and his impeachment a partisan witch-hunt.

In January, the public sentiment encouraged by the president's party very nearly won the day. With opinion swelling against even hearing the House's case for conviction, a plan was hatched and almost executed to abort the Senate trial. Once the trial opened, opinion moved slightly in the direction of the House managers, only to shift back again to the president. But wherever opinion stands this week, it is not fully settled yet. Defending the legitimacy of the House impeachment vote must therefore remain a cardinal objective for Republicans. To permit the impeachment to be discredited would not only jeopardize the political prospects of the whole party. Worse, it would undermine the House managers' defense of the two great pillars that support the republic: our political Constitution and our moral constitution, meaning the unwritten standards of right and wrong that are carried in the hearts and minds of the American people. The struggle over the meaning of the Clinton trial remains so important because it affects the fate of both of these constitutions.

The central issue in the debate on the Constitution was the proper grounds for impeachment. According to the Clinton doctrine, a president, no matter what crimes he may have committed or what offenses he may have caused, should retain his office as long as these do not, in Charles Ruff's words, "put at risk the liberties of the people." For the Republican managers, the commission of a serious crime by the president and his failure to ensure the faithful execution of the laws constitute reasonable grounds for impeachment. The choice offered here, it seems, is nothing less than that between a vulgar new Caesarism and the rule of law.

Nevertheless, despite the short-term victory of the lawless Clinton doctrine, the Constitution has actually been strengthened by the impeachment process as a whole. All the schemes and plots to deny or avoid the Constitution's authority—from censure, to aborting the trial, to dismissal, to hearing no witnesses—were foiled. The Constitution emerged as the only higher ground to which the parties could successfully appeal. Even the president, who served throughout as commander in chief of the expediency school, cynically embraced the Constitution when seeking at the last

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moment to avert a Senate procedure of "findings of fact." There was also a remarkable adherence on both sides to the idea of constitutional originalism in the efforts to define the basis for impeachment. Not since 1789 have the American people heard so much from the Founders; it was rumored that Hamilton and Madison were booked to appear on *Geraldo*.

At last, Republicans, whose political fortunes have suffered greatly over the past six months, may have stumbled on a silver lining. Having tied themselves to the mast of the Constitution, they have discovered that they are far less a party of populism, and far more a party of constitutionalism, than they thought only a short time ago. And they now at least have a clear standard by which to defend their actions. So while Republicans may wish to collect the censure resolutions that Democrats have been circulating and publish them in a fine volume with gold-edged pages, they should resist the siren song of censure itself.

Our moral constitution clearly remains the more important concern. Republicans have learned that it is not as strong as they believed—that it cannot be counted on to automatically carry the day against a fervent partisanship and an unscrupulous president. But even this disappointment pales beside the risk that clear and public standards of right and wrong may be lost to the next generation. This possibility of corruption, which Henry Hyde identified in his closing speech to the Senate as the basic issue of the whole trial, represents the greatest threat posed by the Clinton doctrine. And because the stakes are so high, there can be no time for despair. The moral constitution is now on trial. Its impeachment is not an option.

James W. Ceaser is professor of government and foreign affairs at the University of Virginia.

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Don't Mourn, Organize

PETER COLLIER

ONE IMPORTANT LESSON is that conservatives underestimated Clinton from the beginning. We assumed that he was just a clever parvenu, a cheesy charisma merchant who would make a couple of tries to implement a sixties program and then fold. In fact, he turned out to be a streetfighter who can take a punch; a great communicator unhampered by commitments who understands uncannily the quirks of this era and has made himself into a sort of postmodern, antimatter Reagan.

There was a sort of diabolical brio in Clinton's raids on the conservative agenda.

We should have learned by now that he is better than we are at arranging the correlation of forces and far less finicky than we about bathing in someone else's political bathwater. He made those raids on the conservative agenda not just out of desperation. There was a sort of diabolical brio in it: Capture the flag.

We have learned that he has one remaining vulnerability, a vanity really—and this is the desire to be loved by history, as well as by blacks and women, and to be ranked above the other third-raters who have occupied the White House. And since revenge is a dish history serves cold, we have one last and definitive opportunity to mark him. We should make the Clinton Studies of the future a final battleground.

What should we do? Don't mourn, organize.

While there are rumors of war in Washington, the real thing goes on in neighborhoods and communities, and our side is holding its own in the fight for civic renewal. Some see this as a long twilight struggle, but every day there are small victories in schools and churches and organizations that work to give people back the autonomy and personal responsibility the Left stole from the last generation. Our side seems finally to have unpacked the metaphor of the culture war: This is not a clash of massed armies, but house-to-house fighting.

What we do now should be compatible with this movement. We should certainly refuse to allow conservatism to be defined at its fringes. Otherwise we allow to rise to the top of our agenda reparative therapy for homosexuals and other such sectarian ecstasies. If we adopt the term "compassionate conservatism," it should not be because we like feeling good about ourselves, or simply

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because we hope the phrase encapsulates a winning electoral strategy in 2000. Then these would indeed be weasel words intended to make us ignore the existence of race preferences, for instance, just so we could appear to occupy a dead center.

Instead, we should be compassionate conservatives not just because we believe our program will make the poor and oppressed smarter, but because we believe it will win them their manumission from the liberal plantation, where they have been enslaved for so long. We should make it clear that for us, feeling their pain is not simply gestural politics. This may be difficult. We are very good, for instance, at stating the free-market arguments for school choice, the libertarian principles that make it a wise approach with such significant social economies. But the primary reason we should be for choice is that we want to give poor black kids—members of the underclass, which is the American social crisis that dares not speak its name—a way out of the dead-end schools where the liberals indenture them to waste their minds and lose their lives.

What we should do is pose stark choices, not just in fiscal and philosophical terms, but in human terms, that show the actual casualties of the Left and give people a reason to believe we care.

Peter Collier is the co-author of **Destructive Generation.**

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The Rake's Progress

DANIELLE CRITTENDEN

WELL, ONE THING WE'VE LEARNED is that, in her attitudes towards men, the average American woman is as coarsened and world-weary as a 1920s Bronx showgirl. This was the real surprise of the Bill Clinton scandal. The people you thought *wouldn't* be shocked by the president's behavior—the Washington liberal elite, well-known philanderers, jaundiced columnists, Georgetown hostesses—couldn't express enough outrage, while the people you thought *would* be shocked—feminists, soccer moms, little old ladies—stuck by the guy like dance hall queens to their rich, boorish, stage-door Johnnies. "Whaddya expect of a man like him?" they told reporters, as they held forth from beauty salon chairs and diner stools across America. You could almost hear their gum snapping. "So he's a pig? So what else is new? But he's also kind of sweet—underneath there's a heart of gold in Our Bill. Leave 'im alone."

The scandal underscored the capriciousness of the feminist movement.

Of course the feminists were an especially peculiar case, even aside from their cynical, partisan reasons for supporting Our Bill—he did, after all, present them with the diamond-clad gift of protection for partial-birth abortions. But seriously, was there any stranger sight than Gloria Steinem hurling herself at the man's feet on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, insisting bosses should be entitled to one free grope?

If anything, this scandal underscored the incredible capriciousness of the feminist movement—and frankly, of female opinion in general. Men continue to be puzzled by what, precisely, modern women want from them. Now they know: Women want whatever pleases them at any given moment, no matter how much it contradicts what they said five minutes ago. Did we say it was a serious crime to ask a female colleague out to dinner, or to make a lewd joke in her presence? Sorry, we only meant that to apply to Republican politicians and black conservative nominees to the Supreme Court; future Democratic presidents should feel free to use the White House the way the Rat Pack used their Las Vegas hotel suites. Did we say we thought our politicians should be honest, law-abiding, and of good character? Sorry, we only meant that when the economy was bad; so long as good times are rolling, well honey, let's samba.

Alas, by behaving this way, we not only let off men like Bill Clinton, we punish women's own efforts to be treated with respect, dignity, and equality by the law, let alone be treated with respect and dignity by men. Logic would decree that when the next Republican male is accused of similarly crude behavior, the same feminists who stood by Bill Clinton should feel com-

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pelled to stand by him—or at least stay silent. But of course, they won't. They'll just use that old female prerogative to change their minds, and run the poor bloke out of town.

This is why Republicans make a mistake when they try to remodel themselves in ways they hope female voters will find more attractive—trading in their suits and ties for casual shirts and chinos, speaking like New Men, oozing compassion and sympathy. They only end up coming off as the Nice Guy character who is always dumped for the Rake. Sadly, what this scandal tells us about American women is that what matters most is not whether you flatter them, but what you've done for them lately.

Danielle Crittenden is the author of **What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman,** *just published by Simon & Schuster.*

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Creeping Paganism

JOHN J. DIIULIO JR.

BILL CLINTON FIRST REACTED BRAZENLY when caught red-handed in a series of bald-faced, lip-biting, finger-waving lies. But he rightly intuited that nowadays even unrebuttable evidence of prurient sexuality, perjury, obstruction of justice, and multiple moral offenses against sacred institutions—marriage, the rule of law, and our democracy's highest elected office—would excite only enough elite notice and mass displeasure to somewhat disturb his final years of governing and leave his place in history contested.

Contested, that is, by conservatives, but sanitized by legions of liberal historians, the radical-feminist faithful, the nonjudgmental clergy, the Hollywood crowd, and the abortion-on-demand minions. As recently as 1991, they had demanded a Senate inquiry into allegations that a Supreme Court nominee years before had talked dirty to a female attorney. But Clinton knew their hearts. In 1998, they denounced as "McCarthyism" the Senate's consideration of evidence that a sitting president had phone-sex-plus with a female intern not half his age.

The one-third of the general public that favored Clinton's removal from office, meanwhile, was bigger than the plurality of voters that reelected him in 1996. But nose-counting only distracts us from the profound reality reflected in Monicagate—namely, the creeping paganization of American politics and culture.

I am using "pagan" to describe people who behave as if they believe that individuals own their own bodies outright, that there is no objective moral truth, that no human community need aspire to be more than the sum of its living members' worldly desires, or that it need respect all persons regardless of their physical, financial, and political might. By creeping paganization, I mean the slow but steady increase in the numbers and influence of such people in politics and culture.

The Founders rejected paganism. They asked God's help as they constitutionalized political power so as to transform "the mischiefs of faction" into "the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." By "We the People" they intended a transcendent civic community of "ourselves and our posterity." It was left to Lincoln to wield their worthy Constitution against the ancient pagan practice of domestic slaveholding. This new birth of freedom deepened America's Judeo-Christian political culture, which in this century routed the international pagan movements of fascism and communism.

America's Judeo-Christian polity requires that citizens be socialized—with or without organized religion—to harbor an unyielding regard for the well-being of others, from family members to faceless fellow citizens to even foes. Republican representative and religious conservative Steve Largent, who voted to impeach Clinton, told the president at a recent public prayer breakfast, "I love you." I believe he meant it, and I believe the president was moved by the words. But creeping paganism empties all such words and the sacred trusts they entail.

The growing currency of seductive ethical doctrines that consult only our convenience and invite us to abandon or kill the unborn and the infirm elderly; the refusal of many religious leaders to declare absolutely wrong any form of consensual sex between adults (adults only, for now); misogynistic rap lyrics sung with feeling by tattooed and body-pierced kids from all zip codes—these are but a few signs of paganism on the march. Legalized partial-birth abortions; elected representatives who defer to polls on questions of morality; middle-class neglect of disadvantaged children; a corporate foreign-policy establishment

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that loves profit more than it hates persecution; a bipartisan eagerness to improvise and reluctance to constitutionalize a historic impeachment proceeding—these are but a few fingerprints of paganism at the helm.

Citizens who are troubled by our president's wrongdoing are not all right-wing religious prudes. But citizens who are *not* troubled by it in the least, and who are oblivious to the grave challenges facing our economically prosperous but morally at risk republic, are neo-pagans, whether conscious or unwitting. What should we do? In politics and in culture, we should lovingly but steadfastly resist.

Contributing editor John J. DiIulio Jr. is a professor of public policy at Princeton University.

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Spin, Polls, and Courage

JAMES DOBSON

WHAT A DRAMATIC YEAR it has been for "spinning" since the Clinton scandal broke in 1998. The distortions began with the First Lady's visit to NBC's *Today Show* on January 27, 1998, during which she blamed the "vast right-wing conspiracy" for the vicious rumors that plagued her husband. That set the tone for the next 13 months. Of course there has never been any evidence that conspiracy had anything to do with the affair between the president and a girl the age of his daughter. Thanks to "the dress," we now know he was lying through his teeth when he jabbed his finger at the cameras and denied having sex with "that woman . . . Miss Lewinsky." I contend that Hillary was also less than honest at that point. She *had* to know from the beginning that her husband was lying. After all, she had lived with his philandering for 23 years—a period of time in which Bill Clinton implied to Monica Lewinsky that he had had affairs with "hundreds of women." Hillary is far too bright not to have figured out what was going on. That suggests that her "right-wing conspiracy" theory was concocted by perhaps her own spin machine. It was a great strategy: When in trouble, blame an innocent bystander.

Then came the barrage of sound bites designed to deny, mislead, and confuse the public. They were uttered ad infinitum by cabinet officers, Democratic leaders, White House operatives, and personal lawyers. And who can forget the ranting and raving of James Carville, flitting from one television show to another and declaring war on "Clinton haters." Think back to the unfolding of events during the spring and summer of 1998 when we heard the echo of these phrases, each in turn, with passion and conviction:

Let's all step back and take a deep breath; *Paula Jones has a new hair-do*; *Paula Jones got a nose job*; *Paula Jones is lying*; *Paula Jones is white trash* ("drag a hundred dollar bill through a trailer park and there's no telling what you'll find"); *Linda Tripp has broken the law*; *Linda Tripp is writing a book*; *Ken Starr has wasted $40 million of our tax dollars*; *if we were to impeach members of Congress for infidelity there wouldn't be anyone left in Washington*; *this is just a witch-hunt by Ken Starr*; *this scandal is different from Watergate*; *it's a private matter that's none of our business*; *it's just about sex*; *let him without sin cast the first stone*; *Larry Flynt said Bob Livingston did it!*; *Congress should get back to the nation's business*; *I (the president) have to get back to doing the job the American people asked me to do*; *foreigners think we're crazy*; *everyone does it*; and finally, when the facts become undeniable, *this offense doesn't rise to the level of impeachment*.

The most effective spin of them all, which ultimately saved the president's goose, was the polling data used to manipulate the public and intimidate Congress. We were told almost every day, *the American people want this ended*; *the American people don't care*; *the American people think Clinton has done a wonderful job*; *the American people are going to punish the Republicans in 2000*; *the American people voted for Clinton twice and now Congress wants to overturn the election*. There were very few newscasts during the past year that didn't cite the latest polling information in support of the president. That raised an important point.

I remember sitting in the gallery of the U.S. Senate in 1996 when an effort was made to overturn the president's veto of a bill to ban partial-birth abortions. It failed by nine votes that day and fell short again in 1998. Those were bitter losses, guaranteeing that "murder during delivery" would continue on un-anesthetized, late-term babies. But does anyone remember today that the polls in 1996 showed 71 percent of the American people favored legislation to prohibit it? Probably not, because little was made of the survey. Apparently, public opinion wasn't considered relevant to the killing of babies. I don't recall any news organi-

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zation quoting polling data as evidence that Congress and the president had defied the will of the people.

Polls continue to show today that school choice is desired by 72 percent and parental consent for minors seeking abortion is supported by nearly 80 percent, and prayer in school has been favored for 20 years by at least 75 percent. Since when has Congress felt compelled to abide by the will of the people? Only now when a desperate effort is underway to save a liberal president who has admitted lying and engaging in disgraceful acts!

Considering the effectiveness of the spin machine these past 13 months, it is remarkable that Republicans in the House had the courage to stand on their principles. Now we're told a "furious" president vows to "take his revenge" on these leaders. But I believe millions of Americans join me in expressing admiration and appreciation for Representatives Henry Hyde, Lindsey Graham, Asa Hutchinson, James Rogan, Bob Barr, and the other "managers" who put their careers on the line to do what was right. They didn't win, and our discredited president remains in power, but they are heroes to many of us. I believe history will judge them favorably for their valiant efforts to defend the Constitution and the Rule of Law. As for James Carville and the other spinners of the tale, they will be remembered, if at all, for their deception and manipulation of the truth.

Abraham Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1999, was a tragic day in the history of this country.

Dr. James Dobson is the president of Focus on the Family.

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Our Half-President

NOEMIE EMERY

BILL CLINTON, the man who didn't inhale, and didn't consummate his relationship with the White House intern, may finally have gotten the punishment due him: He has been half, but not quite, impeached. That is, he has been impeached, but not convicted, as the case against him was strong, but not airtight. Of course, he has only been half a president, as he is not respected as an authority and has never been able to lead. He may cherish the illusion of having escaped scot-free from the fracas, but a more fitting simile is that voiced by a Democratic consultant: a car crash, where all walked away from the scene, still alive, but bleeding and staggering. He will stay on for two years, our half-guilty half-president, with his authority gone, not that he will ever miss it. And he will always—now and later—be a joke.

What the Clintons really have shown us is how hard it can be to convict an administration that presses up against the literal limits of the law. This latest obstruction and perjury scandal is of a piece with all of the others—Travelgate, Filegate, fund-raising, and Hillary's futures—in which what common sense tells us must be a true story cannot quite be proven as fact. Five years ago, a prescient Jacob Weisberg forecast all of it in the pages of *New York* magazine: "The Clintons will never be indicted because they were too smart . . . to actually break the law. They were always thinking ahead and looking over their shoulders, considering how matters might look if they ever came to light. . . . As the investigation unfolds . . . Republicans will grow ever more frustrated as the First Couple eludes capture . . . and the Clintons grow ever more resentful as they struggle to break free of the web they helped to spin." Republicans resent not bagging the rodent; Democrats resent defending a man they can't stomach; and the Clintons resent being resented by practically everyone. This sulfurous climate of multiform rancor, their own included, is the Clintons' special bequest to the nation. Not really Camelot II.

That said, it may also be possible to make altogether too much of the particular stink of Bill Clinton. He is not a brilliant political mastermind—or maybe he is, but only at moments. His much-vaunted political skill is really a genius for damage-control, after he blunders his way into chronic disasters he should have avoided in the first place. It is also possible that he is not a generational symbol, bringing in a new age of moral corruption, but a very old type of sweet-talking sinner, who made his way into power by luck. Let us recall that he has never—in a primary, or in a general election—faced a truly strong rival, and that in his presidential races he never won 50 percent of the vote.

Let us recall, too, that elections are not endorsements but choices, often made reluctantly between unbeloved opponents. Let us recall, also, that the choices served up by the Republicans were widely perceived to be poor. Whatever he was in 1991, George Bush by 1992 appeared drained and exhausted, and Bob Dole four years later was even worse. Republicans

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thus are half-responsible for Clinton, having twice failed to produce a credible alternative leader or run a coherent and forceful campaign.

As our half-president looks to his final half-term, having squandered the first half in scandal and diddling, even he may realize how much he has wasted, how hollowed-out his power and his prospects have become. As for his opponents, they have to develop what they have so far been lacking: a leadership that marries vigor to conscience, and does not depend upon technical niceties to keep itself out of the slammer. Then, please God, they will in 2000 take back the White House, and, after that, hose the place down.

Noemie Emery is a frequent contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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The Defensive Press

DAVID GELERNTER

ALTHOUGH IT'S DEPRESSING AND ALARMING that the public thinks so badly of Republicans and well of the president, a questionable assumption underlies many of our darker analyses. Americans know what the press tells them. House Republicans have never explained themselves directly to the people. But surely the public *must* grasp the basics of House Republican thinking, given all those TV hours and newspaper columns devoted to impeachment . . . ? I wouldn't bet on it.

The American press constitutes the world's most powerful defensive line. Operating from strongly fortified positions at the center of American life, journalists capture and rewrite every attempted communiqué from politicians to the people. It's always been this way; what has changed is that the press is more powerful, patrician, and unanimous than ever before. The impeachment drive has been reported almost everywhere with grim disgust, and it's no shock that the public thinks about it with grim disgust—to the extent it thinks about it at all. (Henry Hyde delivered an eloquent summation to the Senate; the *New York Times* didn't bother to print it. Occasional excerpts turned up, scattered over a news story. The *Times* did report that Republican summations showed "a certain fatalistic self-pity.")

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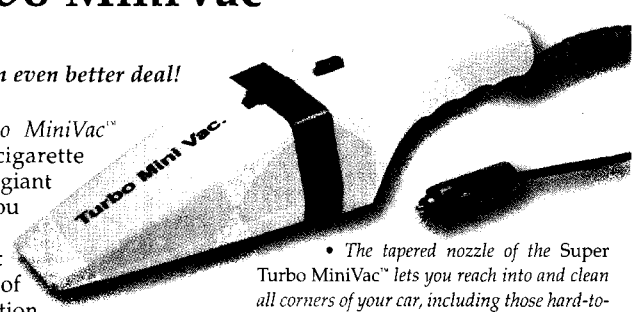

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Contract was a great achievement because it was an armored car that proved capable of delivering a Republican message through hostile lines to the public at large. Leading House Republicans agreed on a clear statement with a snappy title. They referred to it constantly and published it in print ads all over the country. The press laughed it off but couldn't stop it from getting through. Eventually (in a general sort of way) it sank in, and Republicans won a big election victory.

The Republicans' message ought to have been framed in terms of honor and duty.

With the trial over, Republicans are preparing to scatter like teenage hoods on the arrival of the cops. Like teenage hoods is how they have been made to feel. They never want to hear the word "impeachment" again. Their plans are understandable but sad; impeachment might have allowed them to set up a clear moral distinction between their worldview and the Democrats', without spending or taxes or race or education or anything else to complicate the issue. "Rule of law" was the wrong way to frame this case; nowadays (unfortunately) that phrase suggests rich arrogant lawyers, "activist" judges, martinet bureaucrats. The message ought to have been phrased in terms of honor and duty. "This president attacked the honor of the United States as we all, each one of us, sat by our windows and watched. We all saw him do it—saw him lie and finagle and cheat and bamboozle shamelessly; pridefully. We're all tempted to look away from this ugly scene and forget about it, mind our own businesses, let the honor of the United States take care of itself. But we had a duty to speak up and take the bully on. We did it and lost, but we had to try, and we hope you're with us . . . "

House Republicans have said similar things already, but you don't penetrate press lines by making fine speeches and answering reporters' questions. To reach the public you need a concerted strategy—for example (as in the case of the Contract), you hammer out a text, give it a title, and repeat it relentlessly, circling back to it again and again. The battle-weary House Republicans won't do this, and I don't blame them; they have gone beyond the call of duty already, and they're tired. But they've surprised us before; I wish they would do it just one more time.

David Gelernter is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Don't Look Back

JIM GILMORE

THE IMPEACHMENT TRIAL of President Clinton is over. No matter what individual feelings are, as a country we should look to the future and not dwell on these recent misdeeds. Democratic and Republican leaders in Washington must now debate tax relief, education, foreign policy, and other issues that clearly divide the two parties.

Republicans must unite, take action, and look towards the future with optimism.

The Republican party must revitalize, not reinvent itself. We must communicate what we are for rather than what we are against. Republican governors are embracing this philosophy through meaningful tax relief and empowering people to better provide for their families.

The Republican party needs to promote and educate people about our initiatives of change—change in the way we tax and spend the people's money; change in the way we educate our children; and change in making all government programs and services accountable to the people.

Tax relief, quality education, and responsible government promote economic freedom and empowerment. These are winning issues and they are inclusive issues. They allow Republican leaders to reach out to those who have been taken for granted or left behind and to give real hope for a better quality of life to all Americans—black, white, Asian, and Hispanic; working men and women who can't get ahead; mothers and fathers everywhere who want a safer, more prosperous, and more decent life for their children.

Republicans must forge a new way of thinking. A new way of thinking that frees people to make their

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own decisions rather than having the government make decisions for them. A new way of thinking that liberates people through the educational opportunities they need to live their dreams, realize their aspirations, and raise their quality of life.

For the 21st century, we must embrace the notion that limited government can empower people with freedom and opportunity rather than burden them with taxes and a "government knows best" mentality. It is time for conservatives to remember why they want hard working families to keep more of what they earn. The role of government must favor the taxpayers by challenging individuals to take risks that promote economic growth.

Through my initiatives in quality education and tax cuts, Virginia's future looks promising. Leaders in Washington need to address these same issues that affect the daily lives of individuals.

Jim Gilmore is governor of Virginia.

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Clinton v. the Constitution

CHARLES R. KESLER

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S ESCAPE FROM JUSTICE was a disappointing spectacle. Nevertheless, his impeachment contains some important political lessons.

To begin with, the presence of the independent counsel distorted the constitutional process of impeachment. This is not a criticism of Kenneth Starr, who did his duty *sine ira et studio*; but even such a conscientious special prosecutor as Starr could not avoid becoming a standing excuse for the House of Representatives to postpone or duck its own responsibilities. Absent Starr's report, the House would have needed to conduct its own aggressive investigation, call witnesses, and deliberate from the beginning about the definition of impeachable offenses and the (political) wisdom of bringing charges against the president. This would have had two salutary effects: It would have reinforced impeachment as an aspect of the constitutional separation of powers, and it would have allowed the proceedings gradually to shape public opinion.

The Democrats displayed the obsequiousness of a corrupt court party.

Starr's mission was to look for laws that had been violated, implying that impeachment would turn on an "independent" legal question that would be as impartial or value-free or depoliticized as possible. His inquiry had the perverse effect of paralyzing the Republicans (always suckers for non-partisanship), who even after they had voted to impeach Clinton were reluctant to make his indictment a political issue. Yet the House Democrats' bitterly partisan reaction to Starr's report punctured these extravagant, one-sided presumptions of legalism and tainted his inquiry in the public mind.

Moreover, the length and intensity of Starr's investigation helped to inspire the public's suspicion that this impeachment was not a matter of the legislative branch checking the executive in order to defend the Constitution, but instead was about the ruthless pursuit of a private individual by the implacable forces of the state. In short, the public never quite saw this case as concerning the abuse of public office, except maybe Starr's abuse of his office. They saw it as a defense of privacy and individual liberty, personified by Clinton, against the intrusive power of the state, personified by Starr, who seemed like a humorless IRS agent run wild. That his charges against Clinton involved covering up and lying about sex only reinforced Clinton's claim he was being persecuted not for his actions as president but for his conduct as a private man—one of us.

The House Republicans' decisions to release the Starr report and to televise Clinton's grand jury testimony played into this misimpression. The report's recounting of his sins made them less obscene (literally, off-stage), and so the public's indignation dissolved into titillation and finally into ennui. The videotape emphasized Clinton's beleagueredness, rendering him more sympathetic (and pathetic, too). Broadcasting it undermined the Republicans' claims to be strictly following the Constitution, inasmuch as the decision revealed how desperate they were to turn around popular opinion. They

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were in a bad bind, to be sure, but it was impossible to ignore popularity and to play to it at the same time.

One clear lesson from all this, then, is that the independent counsel statute should be allowed to expire, and that the fundamentally political and constitutional quality of impeachment should be acknowledged and respected.

Starr deserves our gratitude for doing the best he could with an unconstitutional office, of course, and the House Republicans, despite their mistakes, deserve honor for their courage and justice. They staked their argument for impeachment, at bottom, on the principle of equality under the law. Unless Clinton has to obey the same laws that we do, he is on his way to being King Bill. Trumping privacy with equality, the House Republicans summarized their legal case against the president in this resonant principle of political justice. By raising this anti-monarchical plea, they (and the senators who voted with them) discovered why they had been called "republicans" in the first place and how they might at least begin to make equality a Republican principle again.

By contrast, the Democrats displayed the servility of Tory placemen and the obsequiousness of the most corrupt court party. Not a single cabinet member resigned in outrage at being lied to for craven purposes; hardly a single Democratic legislator revolted against the party line. Almost to a man (and woman), they preferred Clinton's lies to their own and the country's honor. This is not good for the Democratic party, nor for constitutional government, and it was the great unreported scandal in this whole affair. It was, in fact, the worst and most revealing thing about this affair—far worse than Clinton's retaining office for two more years.

Bill Clinton got away with it again, as he has his whole life, but this time he paid a heavy price. His shamelessness is apparent. Fortunately, he is a coward too, which makes his lack of shame less dangerous to the Constitution than it might be.

As for the Constitution, it is alive and, though not well, still healthier than one might think. A sign of this is that the only oratory that will be remembered from Clinton's impeachment and trial belongs to Henry Hyde, James Rogan, and a few of the other House managers who spoke so bravely in defense of the rule of law in America.

Charles R. Kesler teaches government at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, California.

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The Clinton Kulturkampf

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

REPUBLICANS STARTED the impeachment process thinking they were trying a reasonably straightforward case of perjury and obstruction of justice. They got more than they bargained for. Much more. They started a *Kulturkampf*.

The trial of President Clinton turned into a major political-cultural event. It lacked, of course, the grandeur of the Hiss case or the raw gravity of the O.J. trial. Sex and lies pale in comparison with treason and murder. But like the Hiss and O.J. trials, it will have the effect of dividing the country ideologically. The Clinton trial is entering cultural mythology as the modern equivalent of the Scopes trial: the forces of tolerance, worldly wisdom, and modernity vs. an inquisition of vengeful prurience and moralism. Clinton's acquittal will be made to stand for the triumph of the forces of, if not light, then reason.

So have the elite media portrayed the trial—six months, mind you, after 150 newspapers called for the scoundrel's resignation for lying to and mocking the country for seven months—and it seems to have stuck. The most reviled man in America is Kenneth Starr, followed closely by the House managers. The president, on the other hand, is viewed with ambivalence by an electorate that by now sees him, *mirabile dictu*, as a victim.

For part of this, Republicans have only their own ham-handedness to blame. They made about as many tactical errors as Saddam did in the run-up to the Gulf War, and they have been similarly rewarded. Last August, Clinton had none but the most rabid, Carvilled partisans in his camp. His last line of defense was to change the subject to alleged Republican unfairness and partisanship. House Republicans proceeded to play the part perfectly, first, by releasing the president's grand jury testimony and, then, by defeating Democratic procedural proposals.

Both were entirely unnecessary. They allowed the issue to shift from perjury to partisanship. In the end, of course, House Republicans adhered to the very Democratic parameters they had overridden—finish-

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ing impeachment hearings by Christmas and not expanding their inquiry beyond Lewinsky. But the damage was done.

Some Republicans are consoling themselves with the thought that this will quickly pass. They are wrong. Political fights pass; culture wars endure.

This one, in particular, will be kept alive by the liberal elite because it so conveniently casts all of liberalism's disparate enemies into the same tainted camp: Christian Coalition, witch-hunting moralists, partisan Congress, anti-sexual-liberationists—why, the whole vast right-wing conspiracy is lined up on one side. And according to every poll, the losing side, by a lopsided majority.

In the ultimate irony, Hillary will become the carrier of the Clintonite torch.

The culture war will be kept alive, too, by the Clintonites seeking to remove the stain of impeachment from the Clinton presidency by casting it as the illegitimate act of a vengeful House. Winning that fight is not just vindication for Clinton. It has become the heart of Clinton's search for a "legacy," an enterprise whose goal is now framed negatively: not to be remembered as the second president ever impeached.

Clintonites in search of a legacy and liberals in search of ideological victory have found common cause. They will also have found a champion: Hillary.

Bill's political career is over. He will officially retire in 2001, but he is already history. He has never had much personal credibility. Today no one believes a word he says. His job approval is high but respect for him is non-existent.

Enter Hillary. In the ultimate irony, she will become the carrier of the Clintonite torch, the rallying point both for those who want to vindicate Clinton's legacy and those who want to continue to marginalize conservatives as enemies of tolerance.

She will undoubtedly achieve elective office, probably in the Senate. Wed politically to Bill forever, she will become the chief spokesman of what might be called the moral majority of the left, even as she tries to cast her husband's impeachment as the desperate act of those who could not get her husband otherwise.

The trial is over, but the war continues. And the other side will now have a more ideologically committed, more disciplined, and, in the eyes of the public, more sympathetic champion than Bill Clinton ever was.

Charles Krauthammer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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An Awesome Shipwreck

TOD LINDBERG

LET'S START WITH THE OBVIOUS: There may be grave political consequences for the Republican majorities that moved the impeachment process forward. And the judgment of history—which, as everyone knows, tends to favor the winners—may be that Bill Clinton did not deserve removal from office for his sins in this case. But, comrades, this was worth a fight. If at any point short of the final vote in the Senate the process had been abandoned—something that could only have happened with substantial Republican acquiescence—then the inevitable conclusion would have been drawn that such conduct as lying under oath and colluding to cover up your lies, despite a court's order to tell the truth, is not malfeasance as such, but can only be found to be so based on the context of the colluding and covering up.

That's an offensive notion. Of course all cases are different. But in our country, we start with the law and then we move on to the particulars, not the other way around. Nor, by the way, does our system ensure that the final outcome is just and right. What we share is an agreement—known generically as the consent of the governed—that our constitutional process and our legal process are the means by which we pursue justice. These arrangements—known generically as the rule of law—find vindication simply in adherence to them. It's one thing to note that the Senate would not remove Bill Clinton; that outcome is contemplated by the two-thirds requirement for removal, according to

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which any one-third of the Senate, for any reason, can ensure that a president stays in office until the end of his term. It would have been another thing altogether to abandon the case, for whatever reason or pretext, given the facts about Clinton's conduct that are clear to honest Democrats and Republicans alike.

It's perfectly understandable that Republicans and conservatives aren't now in much of a mood to declare victory, for principle, along the lines above. In fact, the sourness of the general mood isn't hard to explain at all. You just tried to take down the president, and it didn't work out for you. How should you feel? What more by way of explanation does one require?

For those who need cheering up, let me suggest, perhaps optimistically, that at least things can't get any worse. Bill Clinton now has higher job approval ratings than Reagan or Eisenhower did at the same point in their second terms. In addition, the Republican casualty list includes many of Clinton's least favorite people. Gingrich, D'Amato, Faircloth, Livingston: all dead. The shipwreck is awesome. Gordon Lightfoot should write a ballad.

Anyway, wasn't there a point at which Republicans, for example Dan Quayle, were musing about how it would be better for the GOP to keep a weakened Bill Clinton in office than to face an incumbent Al Gore in 2000? (Although I must say, I wrote an article in this magazine in the fall arguing that that notion was foolish, on the grounds that there was no reason to assume that Clinton, should he survive the process, would be permanently weakened.)

As to where we go from here, begin with two truisms: Politics is ebb and flow; and in politics, you begin where you are. That means that even though things are grim, and there's no point in wishing they weren't, they don't have to stay grim forever.

What to do? Well, professional Republicans need to get busy repairing the party's fortunes; and conservatives need to begin anew to make the case for conservative ideas. There's some overlap between the two groups, of course. But it strikes me as ill-advised for either to try to achieve an identity between the two. Conservative ideas shouldn't become hostage to the fortunes and political requirements of GOP partisanship. Nor (in the less likely event) should the GOP rest its electoral prospects solely on the party's adherence to conservatism. There are philosophers and there are kings, and it's usually a mistake for one to try to be the other.

Tod Lindberg is editor of **Policy Review** *and a columnist for the* **Washington Times.**

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Defending Propriety

HARVEY MANSFIELD

WHEN I LAST APPEARED IN THESE PAGES it was to complain that the Republicans had not made an issue of President Clinton's misconduct during the election campaign last year. After the impeachment I withdraw that point. Reluctantly, but with increasing courage and conviction, the House Republicans were brought to accuse the president, partly because Kenneth Starr's report forced them to act, and partly because the president and his party goaded them beyond bearing. What the Senate has done is accommodate the president's popularity and the partisan determination of his defenders.

Now that the die is cast, neither Democrats nor Republicans can be entirely happy with the issue that the impeachment has made between them. The Democrats risk being branded as the party of moral laxity, the Republicans as the party obsessed with sexual peccadilloes. But in truth, the issue is over propriety, over how it is proper to appear, more than about sexual morality simply.

The president admitted that his conduct was "inappropriate," by which he meant something less than "immoral," as Sen. Joseph Lieberman pointed out. Being merely inappropriate, Clinton's conduct should be overlooked, just as it is polite to overlook offenses against politeness. It is disconcerting that offenders against propriety should profit from the fact that propriety usually defends itself by ignoring what is inappropriate. Clinton's very admission becomes almost a demand to do nothing about it.

And the argument has had considerable success: Many feel that it was improper for Starr and the Republicans to pursue impropriety so relentlessly—which means, at all. They do not themselves necessarily think that adultery is a peccadillo, a "slight sin," but, having been taught by Hollywood, they regard it as endemic to celebrities, among whom (thanks to Clinton) they now include politicians.

Republicans, however, have come to the defense of

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propriety. They are the respectable party and always have been. The earnest House impeachment managers were typical Republicans, rightly but easily shocked by Clinton's flouting of the law. Democrats are on the whole a little less scrupulous to deal with, and a little less dull to be with. They represent people who are impatient with propriety and intellectuals who are contemptuous of it.

Democrats are a little less scrupulous to deal with, and a little less dull to be with.

How can Republicans do a better job of defending propriety against impatience and contempt?

Although attacks on respectable America are nothing new—think of Sinclair Lewis—it was the '60s culture that spoke out for liberation from propriety as such. That counterculture has now become the official culture and acquired a propriety of its own. But it cannot escape the contradiction that came out in Clinton's case. To be contemptuous of propriety means to declare loyalty to the urges that propriety restrains, hence to a certain spurious honesty to oneself as against the hypocrisy of the proper and respectable. But in fact Clinton was unable to be honest in this way because he was unable to escape the shame of being caught. He had to lie. His honesty showed, however, in his attitude, in his brazen refusal to knuckle under to Republicans. So his dishonesty got him in trouble, his honesty got him impeached, and both together got him off. For Democrats either thought it improper to pursue him despite his dishonesty, or honestly did not care whether he behaved inappropriately.

Propriety is something we are more likely to learn about from Miss Manners than from moral philosophers, who today typically ignore it. It's not cool to defend propriety. There's no roguishly congenial way to do a job for which you have to heat yourself up like Henry Hyde. You can do it with dignity, as he did, but a certain self-inflation is required that is easily mocked even when it is impressive.

Propriety is stronger than the law because it is enforced with shame, not prison. Propriety, more than sexual harassment law, perhaps more than diamonds, is a girl's best friend. Since propriety is concerned with appearances, it is less than the morality of the heart. But like a broken window left unfixed, which signifies a bad neighborhood, impropriety left unreproved shows people do not care about moral standards. Propriety and morality are close friends, and an assault on the first undermines the second.

In bourgeois virtue—our virtue—not only do self-interest and virtue meet, but their union is blessed with respectability, which is the face of virtue. We bourgeois love our privacy, whether for enjoying sex when we are young or money when

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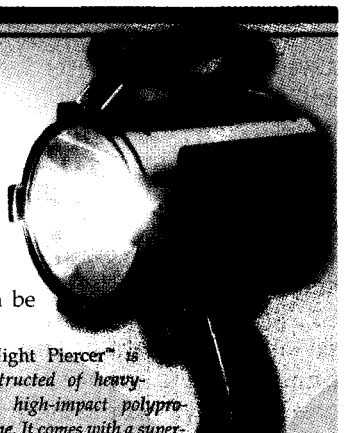

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we are old. But there is no privacy without the curtain of propriety, which offers protection in return for restraint. Behind the curtain you won't be seen, but you must also not let yourself be seen. President Clinton's greatest offense was to let himself be seen, and then to be seen not to care.

One melancholy lesson from this episode: Propriety is connected to virtue but is not as attractive as virtue. That is one reason why the virtuous don't always win.

Harvey Mansfield is professor of government at Harvard.

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It's Dunkirk, Stupid

MIKE MURPHY

HE GOT AWAY WITH IT. So, conservatives are depressed. Here's the good news: The entire six-years-and-running Clinton/Gore confidence scam peaked on Friday, the day of Clinton's acquittal. It's all over.

The irony is that, like a mob accountant who "only kept the books," Al Gore is the one who will pay the ultimate political price for Bill Clinton. Al Gore will never be president. Washington, always obsessed with the last war, will be the last to see this coming, but come it will. The truth is, America doesn't much like Al Gore to begin with, and now the mainspring of election 2000 will be a great national urge to change the channel and try something else.

Gore has been silent about the president. He just sits there, keeping the books.

Already, New Hampshire polls say only 34 percent of Democratic primary voters support Gore for president. Sixty-six percent are looking elsewhere. Combine that kind of weakness with the super-fast 2000 primary schedule designed to help an insurgent challenger, and don't be surprised when Bill Bradley gives Gore the race of his life for the nomination, a race Bradley has a real shot at winning.

Outside of Democratic politics, it is even worse. Any Republican with name identification beats Gore in national polls. Gore's problem is that he is old news. He's not change, he's not new; he's just the political aftertaste of Nixon-lite, Bill Clinton. Like Jerry Ford, Gore lacks a real public identity or a galvanizing message. He's been only a bit player in the president's low-budget movie, and now the credits are rolling, and the audience will not be screaming for a sequel.

Ask a Gore partisan about all this, and you'll hear an earful of well-polished happy-think. Gore has lined up all the generals and bosses in the Democratic party, so winning the primary is a cinch. And, of course, the American people so hate the evil Republicans that a grateful public will happily waltz good ol' Al right into office. Etc., etc.

They're dreaming. The bosses and generals so favored by Democratic front-runners in Washington can't deliver a pizza, let alone New Hampshire. Ask Ed Muskie, Scoop Jackson, or Walter Mondale. Besides, nobody loves Bill Clinton enough to walk across the street for him, let alone elect his successor two years from now. Next year, Gore won't even be able to use Clinton's patented gooey-centrist policy shtick. Remember that Clinton's hokum campaign was fueled by purloined GOP ideas. Al Gore has to endure a real, live Democratic primary. Try a message about welfare reform, shrinking government, NAFTA, and increasing Internet bandwidth there, Al. You'll get to see Bradley's new jump shot.

No issues. No legacy. That leaves character. Public character. And the problem isn't just the Buddhist monk donors, Red Chinese slush money, and so forth, but the Clinton scandal. Gore has been silent about the president. He hasn't even coughed up the phony platitudes the Democratic acquittal caucus in Congress uses to describe how deeply bothered they are by the very crimes they refused to punish.

Gore has just sat there keeping the books, looking the other way, polishing his own ambition. It's fitting that he will take the ultimate fall.

Conservatives should cheer up. The impeachment battle was a defeat, but so was Dunkirk. Fight on. We'll be in Berlin in less than two years.

Mike Murphy, a political consultant, has run sixteen successful statewide GOP campaigns.

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Our Dreyfus Case

CHARLES MURRAY

THINK OF THE IMPEACHMENT ACQUITTAL as the Dreyfus conviction: Deceit at the highest levels. A verdict that ignores the facts. A verdict rationalized because a revered institution must be protected. Popular approval of the verdict. A disdained minority protesting it.

After Dreyfus's conviction there followed the unraveling of the lies, a slow reversal of public opinion, the overturning of the verdict, vindication for Dreyfus, and disgrace for his accusers. Some mirror image of this—the acquittal condemned and the accusers vindicated—seems inevitable in the Clinton case. The accounts of the Clinton White House that have already been published by sympathetic observers portray an immature, frighteningly incomplete person in the presidency. In this tell-all age, the rest of the story will be on the public record within a few years after Clinton leaves office, and it seems likely to be comprehensively dismaying.

The Clinton affair will turn out to have exposed the rot in our institutions.

But the greater parallel with the Dreyfus case is this: Dreyfus the man was a trivial part of what history has come to call the Dreyfus affair, and Bill Clinton the man will be a trivial part of the Clinton affair. From history's perspective, I suspect his presidency and the impeachment will be recalled as the turning of some social or political tide for which he is an emblem. Here is my candidate:

Independently of Clinton, a case can be made that the national government has been losing legitimacy. It is a complicated case, but can be exemplified by the answers to a single polling question asked consistently since 1958: "How much do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" In 1958, three out of four Americans said most or all of the time. In the 1990s, that figure is one out of four. This is not a negligible downturn on a minor polling topic. It is the rumbling that portends a constitutional earthquake.

In the short term, the Clinton affair has increased public alienation by demonizing the independent prosecutor and Congress. In the long term, the Clinton affair is corrosive of other institutional foundations. There is the despoiling of the White House—Clinton serviced in the Oval Office while talking over the phone about Bosnia; the Lincoln bedroom sold for $100,000 a night.

These are images that demean the presidency more harshly than we have yet understood. There is the courtroom oath unmasked. Before the Clinton affair, who among us—except the lawyers—knew how empty is the requirement to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"? Now we all do, a costly disillusionment in a system that works only if people take those words seriously. Perhaps most painful, there is the transparent posturing about the Constitution.

Everyone knows the truth: Clinton was acquitted because he got a thumbs up from the populace, Constitution be damned. Same charges, same evidence, but thumbs down from the populace, and he would have been thrown out, Constitution be damned. It is popular democracy, which the Founders rightly feared, come to pass through polls and focus groups. And these are just a few fragments that are already obvious. In a hundred other ways we cannot foresee, the Clinton affair will be "See-I-told-you-so" proof that the government is for sale, politicians are contemptible, the law plays favorites—in short, that the system is corrupt.

If it were an isolated aberration, the Clinton affair would amount to a new Teapot Dome and presidential girlfriend in the closet—Bill Clinton as Warren Harding with a high IQ. But instead the Clinton affair comes after decades in which the Congress, the presidency, and the Supreme Court have had their constitutional frameworks continually eaten away. The Dreyfus affair labels a defining moment that exposed the rot in the institutions of the French right. The Clinton affair and its aftermath will, I think, turn out to be a defining moment that exposed the rot in the institutions of American republican government. Whether the response will be to shore up the structure or abandon it remains an open question.

Charles Murray is Bradley fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

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No Middle Way

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

WHEN TRENT LOTT FIRST SUGGESTED that Bill Clinton might be censured by the Senate rather than found guilty on the impeachment charges and ejected from office, I was immediately attracted by the idea. Like most conservative observers of the Clinton scandal, I doubted that the "smoking gun" evidence needed for even a Republican Senate to convict would ever be found. Yet by this time last year there was already enough of a commonsense case to find him guilty in the court of public opinion. As Michael McCurry had pointed out with devastating obviousness: If there was an innocent explanation for the president's closeness to Lewinsky, they would have produced it. And they didn't.

If by common consent Clinton was guilty of serious offenses and yet would not be "found" guilty of them, that would surely produce a widespread sense of injustice and even outrage that would have to be appeased in some way. Sen. Lott clearly felt so; I did as well; and so, all too plainly, did a nervous Democratic party. What could be done? Censure seemed to be a reasonable compromise between Clinton's intolerable vindication and his improbable conviction.

The Democrats don't want to confront their own complicity in the Clinton mess.

Nothing in the last year fundamentally changed this calculation. The evidence (the stained dress, for instance) against the president became stronger, indeed undeniable. His own lies and evasions accordingly became more strained, not merely absurd but absurdist (the meaning of *is*). And in order to avoid convicting their own party leader, the Democrats were compelled to argue that perjury and obstruction of justice must meet the most refined linguistic standards of evidence, are anyway constitutionally trivial crimes, and fall beneath legal notice altogether when committed in pursuit of sex, which, far more than love, conquers all.

Yet though all this would once have seemed likely to produce a still greater sense of injustice and outrage at Clinton's acquittal, the opposite is the case. The public seems to have reacted to the House managers' superb presentation of the prosecution case with a mixture of boredom, hostility, and embarrassment. As a result, the "finding of fact" motion (essentially a tougher censure with explanatory footnotes) was abandoned in the teeth of opposition from the Democrats who, it became clear, would vote for at most a very mild censure reproving Clinton's "private" conduct. Even those who want to deprive the president of unalloyed vindication must feel that this censure simply does not do the job.

And, as it happens, I have meanwhile been persuaded that there is no acceptable middle way between conviction and vindication. The Senate had either to acquit or throw the president out. We should accept its verdict as the result of the workings of the U.S. Constitution under the influence of public opinion, while making clear that we profoundly disagree with it.

My first reason is that any compromise—simple censure or finding of fact—is not found in the Constitution and is constitutionally dangerous, leading perhaps to future legal harassment of the executive by Congress. (Can't happen? What do you suppose the independent counsel law is?) For more sophisticated legal arguments, please consult Bob Bork.

Second, the various versions of censure concede too much. A simple censure would at best imply that the offenses cited fell below the level of impeachable offense; in other words, it would be a surrender to the rationalizations of Torricelli, Geraldo, Harkin, Larry Flynt, and the rest of the Comédie Française. A finding of fact would be worse. It would state rather than imply that the Senate judged a president fit to remain in office even though he had committed such serious offenses as perjury. That might just about be justified if Clinton had admitted these crimes and sought the forgiveness of the Senate and the American people. But he remains impenitent, apologizing insincerely for lesser misdemeanors.

Third, censure would let the American people off the hook. Although there is unlikely to be a clear and angry sense of justice denied as a result of Clinton's acquittal, it probably will leave a nasty taste in the mouth. So it should. Largely because of popular opinion, the Senate strove mightily to avoid the obvious verdict that Clinton committed impeachable crimes. They should feel bad about it—and a censure would allow them to rationalize away that guilty feeling.

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What will happen if the people are left to ponder their uneasiness in this way? No one can be sure. They might compensate for Clinton's escape by punishing Gore and the Gephardt Democrats in the next election. Or—and this would be a much more nineties reaction—they might punish the Republicans for forcing them to confront their own moral complicity in the Clintonian mess.

We will, however, learn a great deal that is important from the choice that the American voter makes. And if we are living in a society in which sexual infidelity and promiscuity are not only justifiable in themselves but also justify other sins such as lying and character assassination—a society in which the only real sins are sexual hypocrisy and judgmentalism—maybe we should be aware of the fact. We will be better able to mount persuasive moral and political arguments if we understand the scale of the problem and the sensibility of the people.

Opposing censure is, however, a high-risk policy for the GOP. And the above considerations suggest that the Republicans should avoid voting for it rather than filibustering to prevent the Democrats from voting for it. As Pat Buchanan has argued, let the GOP make it a party matter by allowing a motion of censure to be proposed by the Democrats but then abstaining from it en masse. That would at least establish which party had a guilty conscience.

John O'Sullivan is editor at large of **National Review.**

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World Turned Upside Down

NORMAN PODHORETZ

THE MOST DISHEARTENING LESSON of the entire farce through which we have lived for what feels like an eternity is how easy it has become to turn everything upside down. I infer, for example, from talking to even reasonably well-informed foreigners that practically the whole world believes the following inversions of the truth:

1) That the independent-counsel statute was invented by conservatives to avenge themselves on the '60s by destroying Bill Clinton. When I explain that this institution was created by liberals, that conservatives have in the past consistently called for its abolition, and that Clinton himself strongly supported renewing it early in his term, my foreign interlocutors look at me as though I were trying to put something over on them.

Conservatives should regain their zeal against the independent counsel law.

2) That Ken Starr and other "religious fanatics" were the ones who arrogated unto themselves the right to investigate Clinton's private sexual life. When I explain that it was not conservatives, or the Christian Right, but rather the feminists and their supporters on the Left who invented the idea of "sexual harassment," I am rewarded with a skeptically knowing smile. And then when I go on to inform my interlocutors that it was also the feminists who persuaded the courts to allow investigations to establish a pattern of such behavior when a woman brings suit—a procedure that in other areas of law would be deemed "prejudicial" and therefore inadmissible—I am hit with a blank stare. The stare gets even blanker when I further explain that this is precisely how and why Monica Lewinsky's name came into the Paula Jones case. Finally, it turns altogether glassy-eyed when I add two more details. One is that the same feminists who have defended Clinton—on the ground that his sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky were "consensual"—have previously insisted with fury in their voices that there could be no such thing as consensual sex between a male boss and his female subordinate. The other detail is that on the basis of this theory countless corporate executives have been fired and millions upon millions of dollars have been shelled out by their terrorized companies.

3) That no one in America is punished for lying under oath. When I point out that more than a hundred Americans are at this moment sitting in prison for doing just that, my foreign interlocutors murmur, "Really?" in a tone suggesting that surely I exaggerate.

My guess is that at least half of the American people believe these same inversions of the truth. This is

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not just a tribute to Democratic spin; it also results from the fact that conservatives, never mind Republican politicians, have done next to nothing to straighten out such confusions. On the contrary, just as the feminists were deserting their own cause in order to defend Clinton against the jackboots they imagine waiting in the wings, conservatives rushed to fill the vacuum by turning themselves into champions of the concept of sexual harassment and its abominable legal offspring. Nor have conservatives retained the zeal with which they opposed the institution of the independent counsel when it was being used against the Reagan administration.

What should conservatives do now? Well, we might start by returning to where we were on these issues before and fight the fight we should have been fighting all along.

Now, however, I have to throw in what will no doubt seem a perverse conclusion. I think that even though Clinton richly deserved to be convicted, and though Henry Hyde and his colleagues were honorable and courageous in pressing their prosecutorial case, it would have been worse if they had succeeded. Little if any damage was done to the country when a highly unpopular president like Richard Nixon—whose crimes, by the way, were no better understood by foreigners than Clinton's, and appear, I confess, no more reprehensible to me—was forced out of office. Yet the rancor and the bitterness that would have been caused by throwing out so popular a president as Clinton (whatever the sources of that popularity) would have injected even more poison into our political system than is already so abundantly there. Both alternatives entailed serious evils, but my reluctant assessment is that those brought by acquittal are on the whole the lesser of the two.

Norman Podhoretz, editor-at-large of **Commentary** *and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, is the author of* **Ex-Friends** *(Free Press).*

■ ■ ■ ■

A Plan of Attack

DENNIS PRAGER

WE MAY NOT KNOW FOR A WHILE what we have learned. The nation has undergone a trauma and it is very difficult to know the precise effects of this trauma. Also, much of what is "learned" we may have already known. With these two caveats, here are one American's provisional conclusions:

1) There is a culture war, but it is not symmetrical. Most conservatives despise two people: the Clintons. Most liberals despise millions of people: conservatives, especially religious ones. In general, conservatives deem liberals wrong; liberals deem conservatives evil.

2) America is metamorphosing from a morality-based to a law-based society. The terribly high number of lawyers in America and in politics has had awful effects on society. People are beginning to think like lawyers. American life is literally being de-moralized—moral categories (and common sense) are being replaced by legal categories. Thirty years ago it would have mattered that the president of the United States lied to the country and under oath; now it only matters that he did not commit perjury.

3) To all but true believers, the feminist movement has disgraced itself. It has always been morally bankrupt—e.g., its defense of all abortions for any reason and at any time of pregnancy. Now it is as clearly intellectually bankrupt. The movement had been telling us that "consensual" is a meaningless term when applied to a powerful man and a subordinate woman. They were fooling us. When the powerful man is charming and pro-feminist, a feminist would, as one feminist said, get on her knees to service the man herself.

4) Millions of American men have now been told that millions of American women do not view extramarital sex as particularly troubling. UCLA psychiatrist Dr. Stephen Marmer told me that some of his male patients have said that thanks to women's passionate support of Clinton, they feel much freer to fool around. This makes sense. The reason most married men do not engage in extramarital sex is fear of their wives' reactions. The moment men begin believing that women don't care that much, they will do what their nature demands.

5) In 1994, the Republican party stood for so much that it compiled a detailed Contract With America. By 1998, the party stood for virtually nothing and placed its political and intellectual eggs in the anti-Clinton basket. One cannot base policy on opposition to an individual. Even if Bill Clinton is a lowlife, as most conservatives believe he is, it was a terrible error to focus all their energies on opposing him. They should have welcomed his non-liberal policies and opposed

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his liberal ones.

6) Liberals and Democrats created the Office of Independent Counsel in order to criminalize politics. And they created the sexual-harassment laws that have made it possible and inevitable to explore men's private lives. The nation has reaped what the Democrats have sown. At the same time, conservatives should have cringed while watching tens of millions of public dollars spent on investigating a pre-presidential financial scandal and what books an intern bought at a Washington, D.C., bookstore.

7) Unfortunately, I still do not believe that sexual fidelity and political leadership are related. Since King David, they haven't been. I wish they were. Life is messy.

What to do?

Five years ago, I became a Republican for one reason—aside from the religious renaissance, the Republican party was the only force in America that could stop Democrats and liberals from further eroding America's fundamental values. I still believe that undoing and preventing liberal damage is the most noble and honest Republican agenda. This means:

What next? Go after the teachers' unions and the trial lawyers.

First, relentlessly attack the two most powerful interest groups in the Democratic party—trial lawyers and the teachers' unions. They are inflicting terrible wounds on our country.

Law is coming to be used as a form of income redistribution and non-violent terrorism. That Sen. John McCain believes smoking to be a greater danger to Americans than confiscating billions of dollars from the poor and giving that money to trial lawyers is a prime example of the moral confusion that has affected even important Republicans.

Professional educators and teachers' unions have ruined much of America's public schooling. They have robbed young children of innocence through ideas such as sex education and sexual-harassment warnings to fourth graders. They have stymied Hispanic success through bilingual education and divided America through their multicultural agenda.

Second, work for deep tax cuts. Americans are paying the highest rates of income tax in their history. This has terrible moral and economic consequences. It makes people more reliant on the state than on one another; it discourages saving; it creates cheats out of otherwise honest men and women; it leads people to believe that it is right to take away money from other people; and it forces innumerable mothers to leave their young children to earn a salary.

If our message is unheeded, let the country elect liberals and live with the consequences. Then they will come back to us. And we will know what to do. We should never seek power for power's sake.

Dennis Prager's radio show on KABC, in Los Angeles, is about to be nationally syndicated. His latest book is* Happiness Is a Serious Problem *(HarperCollins).

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Let's Not Move On

JEREMY RABKIN

ONE THING WE HAVE LEARNED is that Clinton will trample anything—a solemn oath, a clear law, his constitutional duty, *anything*—in pursuit of his own advantage. A second thing we have learned is that the Democrats in Congress, down to the very last representative and senator, will participate in Clinton's obstructions, rather than let Clinton be called to account. And a third thing we have learned is that, in Clinton's view, he vindicates himself by discrediting his accusers.

All this being so, we can be sure that the acquittal vote will not put the Clinton scandals behind us. Either Clinton really did disgrace his office to an extent that merited impeachment, or the Republicans behaved with heedless partisan zeal in trying to impeach him. It may be years before public opinion finally comes firmly to rest on one conclusion or the other. But opinion won't remain indefinitely suspended. Americans may now say they are sick of the scandal coverage and the impeachment debate, but they won't soon forget something as momentous as a presidential impeachment. And where public opinion does finally come down will affect how the public views the

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office of the presidency, the standards of public life—and the Republican party—for the next generation.

One immediate awkwardness is that Democrats will soon be demanding that the independent counsel statute be allowed to lapse. The White House will certainly portray this as a judgment on Ken Starr's "excesses." But there is not much sense in defending the institution now, since it did, in its own way, contribute to the public's rejection of the impeachment effort.

Most of us who favored Clinton's removal came to see the specific charges arising out of the Lewinsky scandal as a "synecdoche" (as William Safire put it), a mere illustration of a wider pattern of lawlessness which was the real grounds for removal. But why did impeachment charges come to focus on the very narrow question of whether Clinton's testimony before the grand jury was technically perjurious or his cover-up efforts amounted in a technical sense to "obstruction"? More serious scandals—the wheedling of campaign contributions from Communist officials in China, the accumulation of FBI files in the White House, the perpetration of blackmail and spying operations on opponents—were left unresolved or entirely unexplored by congressional committees, which were content to let the independent counsel take the heat for scandal-mongering. It was, incredibly, left to the independent counsel—essentially a bureaucrat—to decide how to frame the basic issues in the impeachment.

I believe that Starr decided to focus all his efforts on the Lewinsky case because that was where he thought he could catch the president personally. But the issue should not have been reduced to the technical terms of a criminal indictment. When the House Judiciary Committee drafted impeachment charges against President Nixon in 1974, it did not focus exclusively on crimes but listed a whole series of abuses, concerning the IRS, the FBI, and other agencies. Nixon's accusers could not prove that he had personal knowledge of these abuses, but they did not think they had to prove it. Instead, the articles asserted that the president "knew *or had reason to know*" that his subordinates engaged in abusive acts, that Nixon "did direct, authorize *or permit*" various abuses, and so on.

As it was, of course, the focus on the Lewinsky case allowed Clinton's defenders to portray Starr and the House Republicans as Puritans obsessed with sexual peccadilloes. In other words, the impeachment effort marched straight into the Left's stronghold—that fortress of opinion built up in defense of sexual freedom.

We cannot be sure that changing the focus to other scandals would have roused a public already sick of scandal and recrimination. But it is unfortunate that Republicans, not having launched the Lewinsky charges from their own committees, were skittish about pressing home the charges, almost until the House voted impeachment last December, and then resumed an ambivalent posture during the trial.

I am not sure what Republicans can do now to reaffirm the worthiness of the impeachment effort. But they must find ways to remind the public that Clinton's conduct makes it impossible to trust him and therefore impossible for Republicans to cooperate with him on any serious legislative venture. If Republicans shrug off the whole episode as no more than a good try that happened to fail—a mere rerun of the Dole campaign—they will make it easier for Clinton to dismiss them as reckless, partisan, and petty-minded. Then the Republicans, not Clinton and his Democratic apologists, will go down as the villains of this tale.

Jeremy Rabkin teaches constitutional law at Cornell University.

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Cut Taxes—for the Needy

IRWIN M. STELZER

BILL CLINTON IS SECURE in the White House, Congress is taking a break, and the Republicans, after a noble but failed effort to prove that no man is above the law, are wondering what to do now that the need for policy-making is upon them.

Unfortunately, they are not very good at coming up with programs that are both sensible and appealing, and are quick to attack any of their number who suggests that compassionate conservatism might just be a tiny bit more attractive to most people than the cold-hearted variant.

About the best they can come up with is an across-the-board tax cut, with added relief for high earners in the form of lower capital gains and inheritance taxes. Since the highest earners pay the highest taxes, the 10

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percent tax cut that Republicans favor will return to the rich—a respectable word, properly used—far more dollars than it will to middle class or poor families. Wall Street investment bankers and Hollywood movie stars will smile all the way to the bank—and probably contribute a goodly portion of the funds forced upon them by Republican tax-cutters to Al Gore and other Democratic candidates.

Middle class families, meanwhile, will find themselves with so few extra dollars in their paychecks that they won't notice them, and without the goodies Clinton has dangled before them by way of subsidies to "carers" and other new programs. Bad politics.

Republicans should cut taxes for low earners. Let Clinton defend higher spending.

Worse still, bad economics. A dollar added to the take-home pay of a high earner is worth less to him than a dollar added to the pay of a low earner, just as a fifth pancake is worth less to a diner than the first one (to use an example from elementary economics classes). An investment banker is not likely to work harder if his taxes are cut by 10 percent, or at least is less likely to do so than some low earner who finds a meaningful increase in his pay packet.

Which leads to one conclusion: The Republicans should push for tax relief for low earners—cut as many taxpayers from the rolls as available funds permit. Such a move may not persuade many low-income voters to abandon their loyalty to the Democratic party, but it will show the vast middle class that the Republicans are no hard-hearted apologists for the rich.

Better still, a tax cut targeted on low earners will force Clinton to defend his proposed new spending as being more compassionate than giving low earners more money to use as they see fit. And it will increase the gap between the paycheck and the welfare check.

If this be compassion, make the most of it. It certainly makes economic sense.

Contributing editor Irwin M. Stelzer is the director of regulatory studies for the Hudson Institute.

To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing

W.B. YEATS

Now all the truth is out,
Be secret and take defeat
From any brazen throat,
For how can you compete,
Being honour bred, with one
Who, were it proved he lies,
Were neither shamed in his own
Nor in his neighbours' eyes?
Bred to a harder thing
Than Triumph, turn away
And like a laughing string
Whereon mad fingers play
Amid a place of stone,
Be secret and exult,
Because of all things known
That is most difficult.

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was the greatest poet of the twentieth century.

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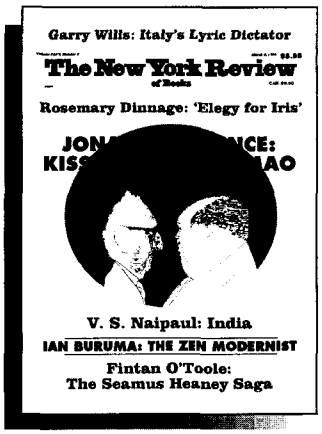

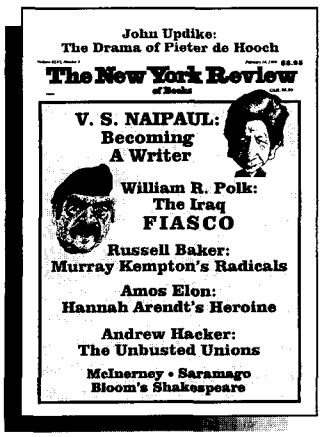

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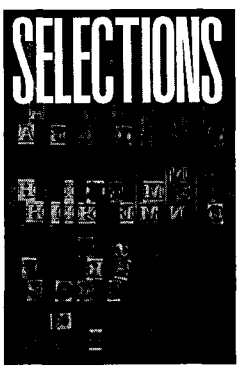

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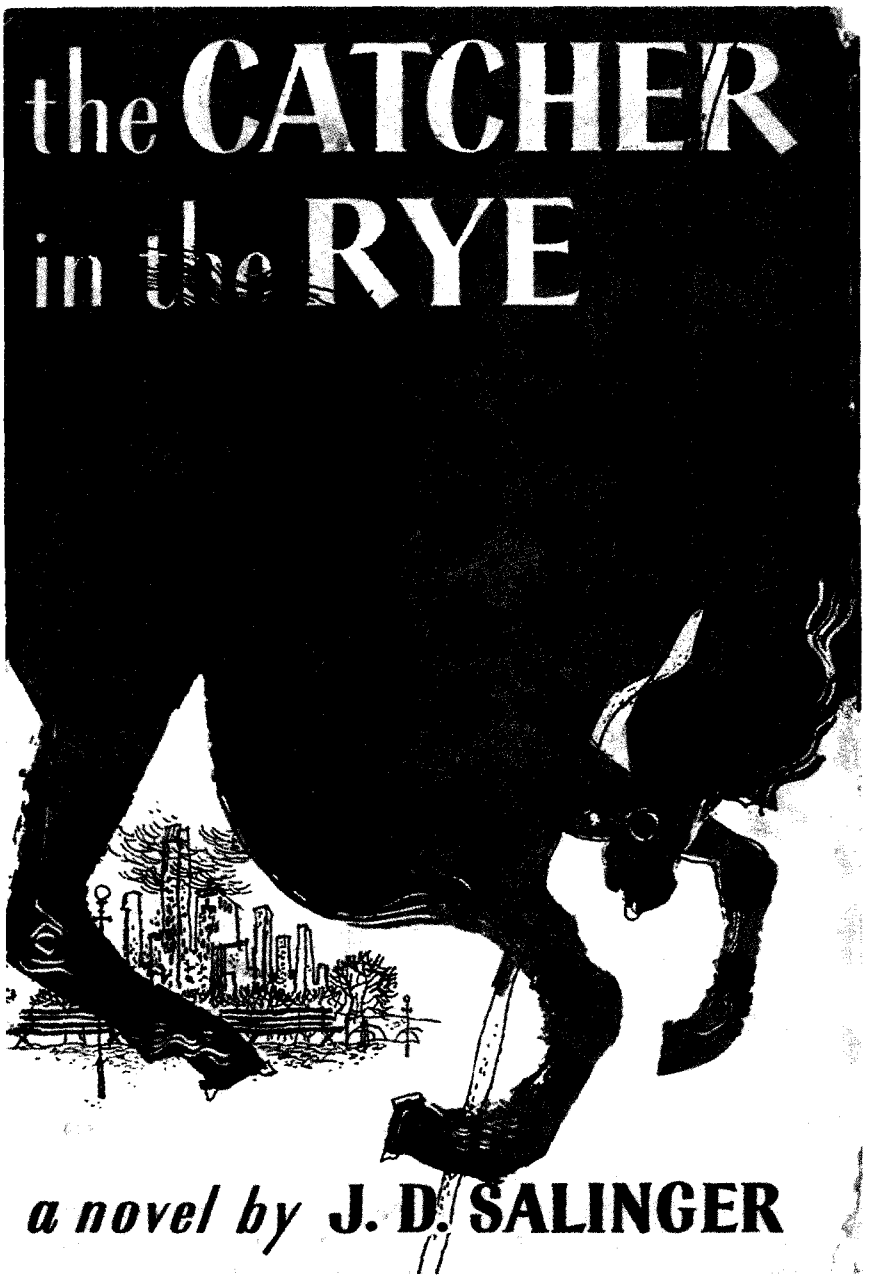
The Sentimental Misanthrope

Why J.D. Salinger Can't Write

By David Skinner



J.D. Salinger's cultural significance seems beyond dispute. *The Catcher in the Rye* is a book read even by those who don't read much. When Mark David Chapman assassinated John Lennon in 1980, he said the reason could be found in the novel's pages. When John "Goumba" Sialiano spoke in 1999 of his role in the "Scores" nightclub case against John Gotti Jr., he explained, "I'm the Holden Caulfield of Scores. I'm Goumba in the Rye." In such books as Don DeLillo's *Mao II*, such movies as *Field of Dreams* and *Jerry Maguire*, Salinger has become a stand-in—our living metaphor, holed up in the New Hampshire woods—for the innocence that needs protection from the outside world. A bestselling author from *Catcher in the Rye* in 1951 to *Franny and Zooey* in 1961, Salinger hasn't published since 1965, but he remains as famous as ever—more famous than ever as each year of silence goes by.

Joyce Maynard's *At Home in the World*, published last year, is only the most recent episode in the search for America's best-known hermit. It describes in detail a nine-month affair she had in 1972 with the sometimes sentimental and sometimes misanthropic writer. Salinger was then fifty-three, while Maynard was eighteen; he was a famous author, while she was a precocious and ambitious girl with a *New York Times Magazine* cover story to her credit. Their affair started with a fan letter from Salinger, peaked with Maynard's quitting school to move in with him, and ended in the middle of a trip to Florida—when Salinger told her to pack up and go home.

A few of Maynard's reviewers celebrated her revelations about the reclusive author: She "surpasses [Salinger] in depth of feeling," according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*; a "literary pioneer," agreed the *Washington Post*. But most reviewers recognized that disliking Salinger's behavior didn't necessitate liking the now-forty-five-year-old Maynard, while others seemed to want to believe in the essential goodness of the man whose *Catcher in the Rye* is every adolescent's favorite novel. "To read *At Home in the World* doesn't require a suspension of disbelief," Katherine Wolff snarled in *Salon*, "but it does require the suspension of literary standards." In the *New Yorker*—the first publisher of much of Salinger's fiction—Daphne Merkin added, "There is something of the stalker in Maynard, the oxygen-eater."

Whatever its faults, Maynard's book contained the first glimpse into Salinger's life in ten years. Since the troubled publication of Ian Hamilton's *In Search of J.D. Salinger* in 1988, no one has added to the few facts available. Hamilton had found in library collections some letters the novelist had writ-

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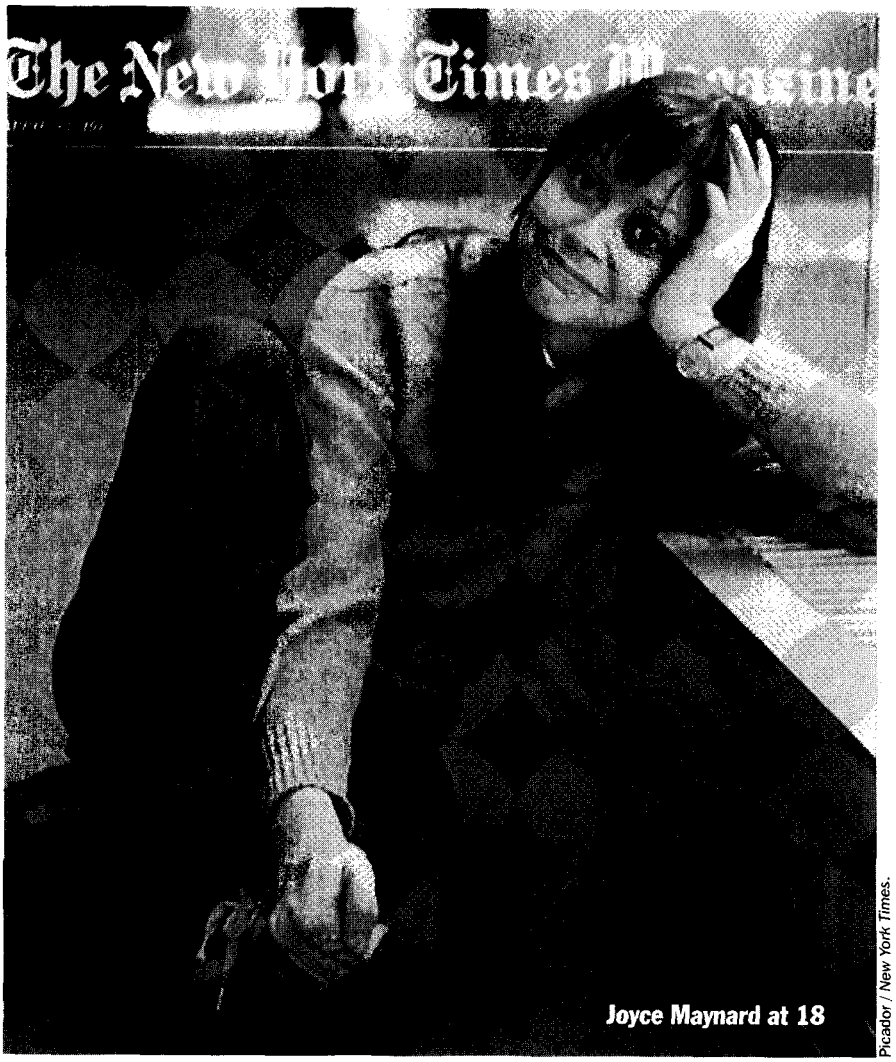
ten over the years, but Salinger promptly sued to stop their quotation. (The lawsuit did force Hamilton to rewrite his biography, but, ironically, it also put the letters into the court record—where they could be quoted in hundreds of newspaper accounts of the trial.) During depositions, it became clear that Salinger couldn't remember what was in the letters, didn't know which ones were being quoted, and hadn't checked Hamilton's last-minute paraphrasings. He just objected—to all of it: the biography, the letters, the interest Hamilton was generating, the whole idea of *exposure*.

Salinger's obsession has continued. In 1997, his agent threatened to sue a young fan whose website provided quotations from *Catcher in the Rye* whenever a visitor clicked a red-hunting-cap icon. In November 1998, Salinger stopped Lincoln Center from showing *Pari*, an Iranian film loosely based on *Franny and Zooey*. In a world where recycling Salinger's work is outlawed, only outlaws do it. An "anarchist publishing collective," for instance, has recently printed *Twenty-Two Stories*, a collection of early fiction. Copies are few and distributed only "on a personal level."

Joyce Maynard explains, in her introduction to *At Home in the World*, why she decided to violate Salinger's desire for privacy—and the passage is a fair measure of her silliness, her conventionality, and her prose: "I pray what my children take away from this story is freedom from the kind of shame I experienced as a young person, and the lesson that every child, woman, and man should possess license to speak or sing in his or her true voice." Over the years, Maynard has made herself into a sort of low-rent anti-Salinger. She is public in every way and publishes as often as she can. In newspaper articles, her Web site, and her newsletter, she writes about her children, divorce, baking tips, alcoholic father, troubled relations with her sister. Hers is a life without curtains, and everybody is supposed to want to peek in.

It's enough to make one wonder what Salinger ever saw in her. This is, after all, the man who, by Maynard's account, thinks the vast majority of human beings are phonies and fools. In one poignant scene, Salinger tells her to change her miniskirt: She looks ridiculous, he says—but "don't take it personally, . . . it's a common failing of mankind."



Joyce Maynard at 18

Picador / New York Times.

How such a misanthrope could stand someone who later prays for the "true voice" of "every child, woman, and man" is a mystery—until one sees the darling, pixilated, *New York Times Magazine* photograph of the anorexic young Joyce Maynard, the girl whose eyes are too old for her years. She is Phoebe, the sister Holden Caulfield wants to protect in *Catcher in the Rye*. She is the girl in the red tam playing with her dog who makes Zooey Glass realize that there is good in the world in *Franny and Zooey*. She is the child on the beach whose foot Seymour Glass kisses before he walks off to kill himself. She is the Wise Child.

How such a girl could turn into the author of *At Home in the World* is also a mystery—until one sees the dust-jacket photograph of Maynard today. She has a *stretched* sort of quality, the half-mad appearance of having desperately held on to something for too many years. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur once distinguished children from saints, the first innocence we are born with from the second innocence we must strive for. Once upon a time, Joyce Maynard was a J.D. Salinger character—and, like all his characters, there was nowhere for her to go as an adult. Shining through the photograph of the grown-up Maynard is the look of first innocence self-consciously cultivated for so long it has grown into something very much like guilt.

Salinger's desire for solitude is perhaps the most famous of its kind. It has inspired half-baked theories about his

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identity, pilgrimages to his home in Cornish, New Hampshire, and even trickery to make him come outside and greet his cultist visitors. In a 1997 story in *Esquire*, Ron Rosenbaum wrote of a group of boys who dumped one of their party, soaked in ketchup and screaming as though in pain, onto the street in front of Salinger's house. It didn't work. Salinger's seclusion inspired Rosenbaum to argue that silence is the only eloquence in a media-saturated age.

But, in fact, Rosenbaum and Maynard and the ketchup-boy and Hamilton and all the rest of those in search of J.D. Salinger have it wrong. The reason for his silence is not found in his life, but in his fiction—the work that captured perfectly the adolescent who has discovered the world is corrupt. Salinger's compounding of misanthropy and sentimentality was always smart. He knew that the problem is not children but adults, just as he knew that the solution involves God somehow. That's why his late stories filled up with saints and seers and sages and holy fools. But he never quite figured out *how* it worked, and his stabs at second innocence kept falling back into first innocence. In raising his children too high—in making childhood not just innocent but *wise*—Salinger damned his adults forever and ever.

The one who came closest to catching this is Mary McCarthy. In 1961, *Time* magazine published a fawning cover-story canonizing Salinger, and McCarthy responded in a scathing essay in *Harper's*. The charm of Salinger's characters, she argued, derives from the intimacy of a small inside group closed to outsiders. Exclusivity is the pre-condition of a sentimental self-love that sensationalizes the insiders' prosaic life. But to perform this, McCarthy claimed, the author must reject the rest of mankind—which is why Salinger, the biggest phony of all, must put in each of his books an extended attack on phonies.

McCarthy, however, underestimated her argument. The sentimentalizing of life and the attack on phonies aren't just explanations of why Salinger *did* fail; they point to why he *had* to fail—why he has been unable to publish since his last short story, "Hapworth 16, 1924," appeared in the *New Yorker* in June 1965. Salinger's world has a built-in doomsday, a point beyond which it can no longer be a part of the world of other people.

The first part of Salinger's brief career consists of the 1951 *Catcher in the Rye*, five of the 1953 *Nine Stories*, and various magazine stories from the 1940s, some available only in bootleg editions. The second part of his career tells the saga of the Glass family. It begins with four tales in *Nine Stories*, runs through the 1961 *Franny and Zooey* and the 1963 pair of stories, *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour—An Introduction*, and ends with "Hapworth 16, 1924," unavailable except in pirated collections.

Maynard at 44

AP / Wide World Photos

As cynical as it is sentimental, *Catcher in the Rye* is easily Salinger's best work. In the novel, only children escape being phonies, but that doesn't save them. To describe the actual dying of a child—as, say, the fearless Charles Dickens would have done—is impossible in the cynical, naive, confused, and knowing voice Salinger developed for his hero. But the reader eventually discovers that not one but two young sensitives have died before the story opens.

The younger brother of the narrator Holden Caulfield "was terrifically intelligent," but he died of leukemia. Just before the expelled Holden leaves school for the wanderings around New York that form the bulk of the book, he writes a descriptive essay for his roommate, using as the subject his dead brother's left-handed outfielder's glove—on which the boy had copied poems in green ink so he would have something to read while waiting for pop flies.

Later, when the hungover Holden is drifting aimlessly through Grand Central Station, he can't stop thinking about a classmate, "old James Castle," a "skinny, weak-looking guy with wrists about as big as pencils." Physical weakness turns out to be proof of goodness: After telling a conceited boy that he is, in fact, conceited, Castle jumped from a dorm window rather than take it back.

About an adult pianist he admires, Holden says, "If you do something too good, then, after a while, if you don't watch it, you start showing off." But children in *Catcher in the Rye* are never conscious of their own goodness. That's exactly what makes them vulnerable to cruelty. At his sister's school, Holden notices an obscenity scrawled on the wall. He can't help picturing his sister and the other innocents, and how they probably don't know the word. But soon enough some jerk will explain it. And then the children will start worrying. Holden imagines smashing the head of whoever wrote it.

The perfection under siege in *Catcher in the Rye* belongs only to children, and it inspires Holden to imagine a playground in a ryefield perilously close to a cliff: He would stand by the cliff, basking in the innocence of the children at play and make sure they didn't fall off—the catcher in the rye.

The thing that allows Holden to recognize the innocence of children—his knowledge of the existence of phonies—is also what sets him against adults. In the end, though, he pays for passing judgment on others, even when they deserve it. Salinger is at his best in *Catcher in the Rye* because the narrator lives out the consequences of being a sensitive, unstable teenager. What few graces the world has for Holden—time spent with his sister Phoebe, his brother's baseball mitt—do not protect him from having to face the reality of other people. The adult world may be filled with horrible people,

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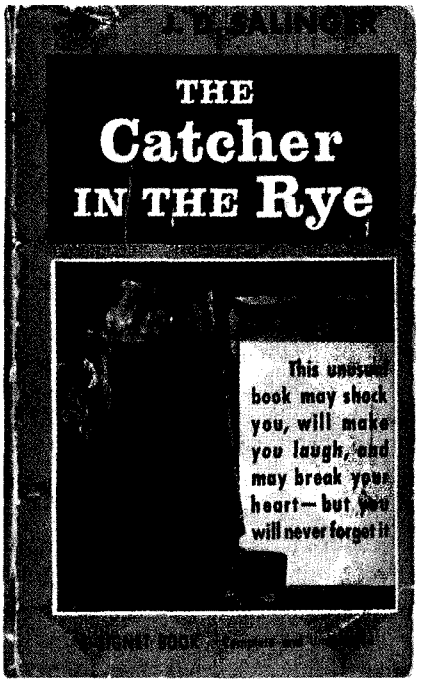


but Holden Caulfield is no angel either. And in the novel's beautifully ironic ending, the people who burdened him most become, when they are no longer around, the objects of his affection.

Of the five tales in *Nine Stories* from the time of *Catcher in the Rye*, three are mild, anecdotal studies of young, upper-class Manhattanites. In them, however, the victims of life's misfortune are, like Holden Caulfield, also perpetrators of misfortune. Holden is partly to blame for ending up in a psychiatric ward. So the naive husband in "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes" is partly to blame for his wife's cheating. So the hero of "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" discovers that the art school he has joined as a teacher is a fraud, after he had lied his way onto the faculty.

The other tales in *Nine Stories* concern the Glass family—who go on to fill the rest of Salinger's fiction. The Glasses consist of seven precocious geniuses and their parents, two retired vaudevillians. All the children appeared at various points on "It's A Wise Child," a national radio quiz show for pre-teens. The two eldest, Seymour and Buddy (who narrates most of the stories) oversaw the education of the others and taught them the important lessons of life. Interestingly, the story of Seymour's suicide at age thirty-one is the earliest of the stories, while the last, "Hapworth 16, 1924," shows Seymour at his youngest, age seven. This arch from an unbearable adulthood back to an exhilarated childhood represents a journey into perfection, from the world of other people into the utopia of Salinger's Glassland.

Simpletons and phonies surround the Glasses, but in the case of Seymour's bride, Muriel, simplicity is proof of goodness. In a diary entry in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," Seymour describes the thrill he receives from Muriel's lack of self-consciousness: "She has a primal urge to play house permanently." She's not a genius and may not even be particularly bright, but

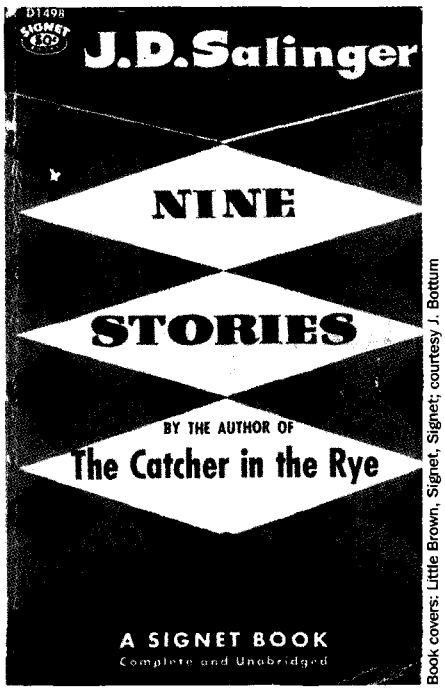
> how I worship her simplicity, her terrible honesty. How I rely on it. . . . A person deprived, for life, of any understanding or taste for the main current of poetry. . . . She may as well be dead. . . . I find her unimaginably brave.

Muriel's stupid opinions, including her undying respect for her annoying mother's even more stupid opinions, the middlebrow novels she reads nightly, the analyst she sees regularly, her wish to say and do exactly what other married couples do—it's all proof of the innocence that Seymour, like his siblings, needs to find in the world.

Usually, they don't find it. When the Glasses take their chances in the subpar world of other people, the characteristics they most prize within the family—endless curiosity, a poetic appreciation for the funny details of life, the innocence of children—are measured by more fickle standards. The pretentious boyfriend of Franny Glass in *Franny and Zooey*, Lane Coutell, for example, is a bright, Ivy League, literature student who worships false gods like the poets who teach at Columbia where Franny is a student. She tries to correct him: "They're just people that write poems that get published and anthologized all over the place, but they're not poets." Anyway, college, Franny says, is "the most incredible farce."

Franny is headed toward a nervous breakdown—precipitated in part by an attempt to pray without ceasing, as described in a book she found on the dead Seymour's bookshelf, *The Way of a Pilgrim*, written in the nineteenth century by a Russian peasant with a withered arm. Just as her quest is beginning, however, Franny goes on a date with Lane, who explains to her over frog legs his discovery that the novelist Flaubert lacked "testicularity." The contrast between Lane's pretentiousness and the Russian peasant's simplicity is Salinger's standard divide between other people and Glassland, but Lane was doomed from the start. As Franny's train arrives at the beginning of *Franny and Zooey*, Lane "emptied his face of all expression that might quite simply, perhaps even beautifully, reveal how he felt about the arriving person." Such fakers hide the innocence and love Franny needs in abundance to go on with life, and Salinger puts the burden on the world to prove it can live up to the standards raised by the Glasses.

In "Raise High the Roof Beams, Carpenters," the foil is Muriel's matron of honor, Edie Burwick. Her false god is Muriel's mother, who pronounces her son-in-law a "latent homosexual" and a "schizoid personality." Says Edie, "I honestly think she's one of the few really brilliant people I've ever met in my entire life." She doesn't think, she *honest-*



Book covers: Little Brown, Signet, Signet; courtesy J. Bottum

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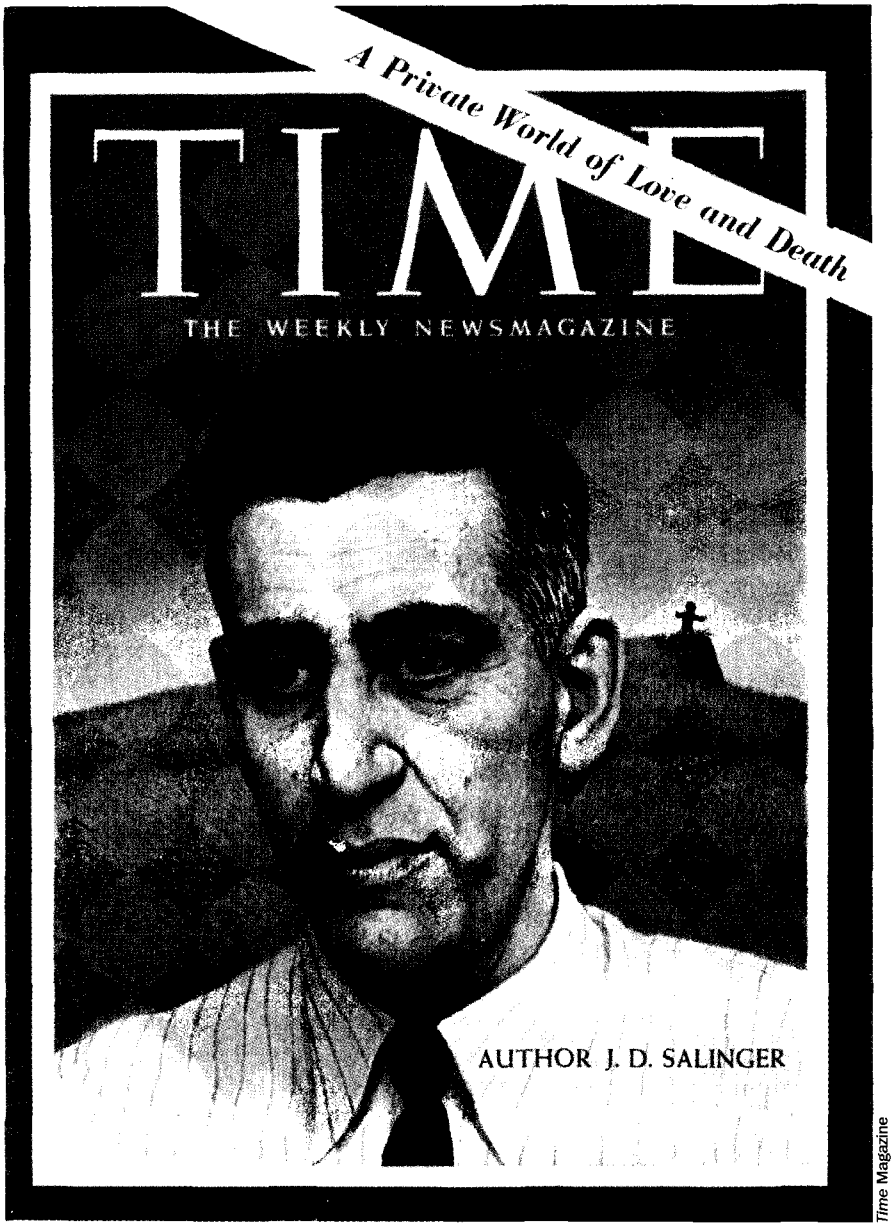

Time Magazine

ly thinks; it's not just ever or in her life, but *ever in her entire life*. Poor, pretentious Edie can't even begin to see that in meeting Seymour she has met a true genius, "a true poet," as Buddy describes him.

After "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," Salinger never published a story with a non-Glass character. The second segment of *Franny and Zooey* doesn't even leave the Glass home, a rambling Manhattan apartment described in endless detail. Even the living room is evidence of the simple-hearted geniuses who lived there: *Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase* atop *Fear and Trembling* on the bookcase. The Glasses' cozy clutter is detailed in Salinger's listing of fifty items in the bathroom medicine cabinet. As Mary McCarthy put it, "Every single object possessed by the Glass communal ego is bent on lovably expressing the Glass personality—eccentric, homey, good-hearted."

The climax of *Franny and Zooey* comes in the sweetly theatrical spiritual counsel Zooey offers his sister. "I remember about the fifth time I ever went on [the radio program 'It's A Wise Child'], . . . Seymour'd told me to shine my shoes just as I was going out the door. . . . He said to shine them for the Fat Lady . . . He never did tell me who the Fat Lady was." After many entertaining pages of the bitter sibling squabbling, it comes to this: The Fat Lady, Zooey tells his sister, is everywhere and everyone. In the world of other people, every annoying, everyday person is the Fat Lady. And the Fat Lady, he tells her, is Christ: "Christ himself, buddy." It is a terrific speech, earnest and funny, but also very thin. The enormous intellectual power stacked to the ceiling in the Glass apartment turns cute on a dime.

That speech at the end of *Franny and Zooey*, however, is as close as Salinger gets to escaping the corner into which he painted himself. The Glasses' religious instincts often seem drawn from a freshman survey course in world religions. Zooey does accuse Franny, with her "bide-a-wee-home heart," of thinking that Jesus has to be somebody really nice like St. Francis of Assisi or Heidi's grandfather. But throughout the novel, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Islamic mystics, Plato, and the Victorian clergyman Kilvert are all rolled into one uniform collection of sage sayings from indistinguishable seers and holy men.

Throughout the novel, that is, until the end, when Zooey speaks the word "Christ." Every previous mention (Salinger's special interjection "Chrissakes" aside) had only been of "Jesus"—another edifying world-religion character, another seer, holy man, and honorary family member: Franny, for instance, recounts the story that Jesus visited the Glass kitchen one night to ask the very young Zooey for a *small* glass of ginger ale. Then, suddenly, for a brief moment at the novel's conclusion, Jesus is Christ, the Anointed One, God Himself in Whose image were formed even fat ladies listening all day to the radio, even phonies like Lane Coutell, even precocious little brats like Franny and Zooey.

If there was a chance for Salinger to break free from first innocence, to climb out of the well of sentimental misanthropy into which he had fallen, it surely involved something like this. But he couldn't maintain it, or he wouldn't seize it, and his remaining two stories narrow even his Glass world down to an unbearable point.

"Seymour—An Introduction" gives few details that can't be discovered in the earlier stories. What it adds is mere-

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ly praise, a sweeping of Seymour up into high, holy company. "He was all real things to us," Buddy writes, speaking for the whole family, "our blue-striped unicorn, our double-lensed burning glass, our consultant genius, our portable conscience, our superego, and our one full poet." *Catcher in the Rye* is written as though Holden were sharing confidential information with the reader; "Seymour: An Introduction" as though such sharing is impossible. One digressive sentence contains a hundred and eighty-three words and says nothing except that Seymour was half-Jewish and had unusually intimate relations with his hands.

Last year, a small press in Virginia announced an authorized book publication of "Hapworth 16, 1924," the final Glass story. But Salinger pulled back again, and the publisher now says the book is "indefinitely delayed." "Hapworth" consists entirely of a letter from the seven-year-old Seymour, describing his impressions of summer camp and requesting books for Buddy and himself: Conversational Italian, the complete works of Leo Tolstoy, the Gayatri Prayer, *Don Quixote*, Raja-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga, "George Eliot, not in her entirety," "Charles Dickens, either in blessed entirety or in any touching shape or form. My God, I salute you, Charles Dickens!"—and so on and on through dozens of authors, subjects, and titles.

There's deliberate comedy in this erudite list, but there's another point as well, for it places Seymour firmly among the poets and other holy men, and far beyond our ken. Other characters are simply dismissed: "Few of these magnificent, healthy, sometimes remarkably handsome boys will mature. The majority, I give you my heartbreaking opinion, will merely senesce." And so, at last, are we dismissed: Even Salinger's readers are exiled finally to the unnecessary, unpleasant, phony, non-Glass world of other people.

From this deep, solipsistic well, there truly is no escape for Salinger. To write a new story would require leaving the Glass family, and to publish it would require joining again the world of Edie Burwick and Lane Coutell—and Joyce Maynard and Ian Hamilton and the ketchup-boy and the Fat Lady. It would mean forgetting the wise child's sentimental misanthropy and the precocious adolescent's division of humanity into the wonderful and the horrible. It would mean joining the painful search that actual adults must all undertake for the second, and real, innocence. ♦

WORKING FOR STALIN

Why Americans Make Bad Spies

By Lauren Weiner

Left-wing historians used to say that their anti-Communist opponents greatly exaggerated the American Communist party's Cold War ties to Moscow—and thereby impugned a political organization that did so much for progressive causes.

But nowadays, with evidence pouring in from Soviet archives, the Left has shifted into a mode that might be called "admit but minimize." As the historian Ellen Schrecker recently asked, "Were these activities so awful?" Were they "such a threat to the nation's security" that they justified intrusive investigations and loyalty oaths?

ALLEN WEINSTEIN AND ALEXANDER VASSILIEV
The Haunted Wood
Soviet Espionage in America—the Stalin Era
Random House, 400 pp., $30

Admit-but-minimize is a weak strategy. As Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev's new study, *The Haunted Wood*, shows, the Americans who worked in Russian spy rings helped the Soviet Union inform itself about everything from U.S. war preparations and the Roosevelt administration's foreign-aid plans to how to build atomic bombs. Based on files from the Soviet secret police (the KGB, or NKVD, as it was called during the 1930s), *The Haunted Wood* pieces together the fascinating stories of well-known and not-so-well-known Americans who betrayed their country, together with the NKVD officers who managed the secret networks.

In fact, however, what Weinstein and Vassiliev have discovered should hearten anyone who still admires the independent spirit of American communism—for it turns out that the Americans were quite a handful. Several of the Russian agents, not unlike the hapless abductors in the O. Henry story "The Ransom of Red Chief," were in over their heads. American spies Boris Morros and Congressman Samuel Dickstein—who were in it for the money—ran rings around their Soviet minders, bilking them of large amounts of cash. Morros, a Hollywood producer, was supposed to set up Soviet-controlled business ventures in Tinseltown. He played at doing this until, to the Russians' consternation, he became a double agent with the FBI and ended up getting his NKVD handler and the handler's wife convicted of espionage.

The Haunted Wood breaks new ground on Dickstein, a New York Democrat who was overpaid by the NKVD to deliver information on vast networks of American fascists that existed only in his imagination. (Ironically, Dickstein pioneered the smear tactics for which Senator McCarthy would become famous, and it was Dickstein's anti-fascist crusade in the House of Representatives that metamorphosed into the House Un-American Activities Committee.)

The NKVD documents, including cables sent back and forth between Moscow and stations in New York and Washington, attest to Soviet anxieties

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about the unruly Americans. Their gregariousness ("purely American anarchism," sniffed one Soviet agent who posed as a diplomat in New York) kept fouling up the compartmentalization of contacts so necessary to Soviet-style *konspiratsia*. Two impudent underground go-betweens, Nathan Gregory Silvermaster and Jacob Golos, fought their NKVD bosses for control of their delivery operations. The more intrepid underground members (Julius Rosenberg, Victor Perlo) could not be persuaded to observe security rules, while those who wavered in their devotion to the cause worried Soviet intelligence for another reason: They might defect and squeal to the FBI.

The waverers are the most interesting people in the book. Even a commitment to social justice—which they associated entirely with communism—could not keep a certain tortured patriotism from asserting itself. Duncan Lee of the Office of Strategic Services, atomic spy Klaus Fuchs, and the State Department's Michael Straight and Lawrence Duggan were among those who agonized about giving information to the Russians.

The same people who took seriously the fact that they were betraying their country also seem to be the ones who most hated the prospect of their secret activities' becoming known. The guilt seems marginally commendable and the worry rather craven, but the combination, in any case, was powerful enough to drive Lawrence Duggan to commit suicide as U.S. authorities closed in on him.

Many who appear in these pages, of course, were rock solid. The NKVD never had a moment's trouble with the physicist Theodore Hall. Likewise the GRU, or Soviet military intelligence, gave Alger Hiss high marks. The Russians yearned for more like them: The files show that loyalty obsessed the Kremlin every bit as much as it did the White House. Indeed it was defectors—most prominently, the courier and group handler Elizabeth Bentley, who told U.S. law enforcement everything she knew in late 1945—who forced the Russians to dismantle much of their effort as the war drew to a close.

Like her lover Jacob Golos, Bentley had been intent on buffering Americans from Soviet control. Golos and Bentley insisted that their skittish recruits would only stay if they were told their documents were being transmitted to officials at American Communist party headquarters in New York, not to Soviet intelligence. (The two entities were connected; Earl Browder, head of the open Communist party, also worked for the NKVD.) After Golos's death in 1943, Bentley lost control of her network to Soviet agent Ishkak Akhmerov—though it was a pyrrhic victory for the Russians, given her imminent defection and testimony against her former confederates.

American spies like Bentley were often offered what Weinstein and Vassiliev call the "comforting fiction" that they were dealing only with the American party and not really with Stalin, author of the bloody purges and the nonaggression pact with Adolf Hitler. The weak characters availed themselves of this psychic shield, while the strong made fun of it as flimsy. "I am not a child," the Treasury Department's Harold Glasser told his handler. "I realize exactly where and to whom my materials have been going for several years."

Curiously, Golos and Bentley's shield, flimsy as it was, managed to outlive the Soviet Union. It is with us today in the lore of elderly Communists. John J. Abt, for example, wrote in his 1993 *Advocate and Activist: Memoirs of an American Communist Lawyer* that his underground work in Washington was not treasonous because he thought he was only sending reports to his compatriots at Communist party headquarters in New York and not to "foreign governments."

Abt's other defense is that the official papers he handed over as a lawyer at the Agricultural Adjustment Administration had no real intelligence value anyway. That happens to be true, but *The Haunted Wood* also provides us with the information that Abt and his underground unit were outraged when the NKVD lost interest in them and shifted to more valuable sources.

Weinstein and Vassiliev's fine new volume is full of stories like this. It adds not just to the historical record but to our knowledge of how many permutations there really are to dishonesty in the human heart. ♦

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MOSES AT THE MET

Schoenberg's Opera Reaches the Promised Land

By Laurance Wieder

Arnold Schoenberg had a superstitious horror of the number thirteen. He was born on September 13, 1874, the day after Rosh Hashanah. A Viennese Jew reared as a Catholic, he converted to Lutheranism in his twenties, before returning to Judaism in 1933.

Schoenberg's opera *Moses und Aron*, based on passages in the books of Exodus and Numbers, was composed using the twelve-tone method he invented. He spelled Aaron with one "A" so his opera's title wouldn't have thirteen letters—though the plot summary provided by New York's Metropolitan Opera for its new production locates Act One of *Moses und Aron* in the "thirteenth century, B.C."

Few lives in art were more dogged by contradiction and controversy than Arnold Schoenberg's. Recognized as a genius from an early age, he could have fashioned success in the manner of Richard Strauss. Or he could have assumed the legacy of Gustav Mahler, composing huge orchestral and choral works, as he did with the epic folk-song cycle *Gurrelieder* (1900). Schoenberg even composed naughty songs for the turn-of-the-century Viennese cabaret.

But with more and more insistence, "the dissonance" repressed inside the conventional language of music was clamoring for release from those harmonic rules that "required" music to end in the key in which it had begun. Harmony signals resolution, a neatness in the packaging, a pat solution that could no longer claim to be more than a fiction. And that became intolerable to Schoenberg, who regarded music as a vehicle for truth and himself as its reluctant emancipator.

A poet living in Patchogue, New York, Laurance Wieder is co-founder of Chapbooks for Learning.

From 1900 to 1913, Schoenberg's compositions (and those of his students Alban Berg and Anton Webern) grew stranger and stranger to Viennese ears. In 1912, Schoenberg finished *Pierrot Lunaire*, a song cycle that still sounds like the future. In February 1913, his *Gurrelieder* was staged in Vienna to great acclaim. The next month, a performance of his more recent works provoked a riot. To the end of his life, Schoenberg drew the fire of critics and a middlebrow public that went to concerts for reassurance and relaxation, to be lulled instead of invited to think. It might have been the dissonance initially. But something more set the wasps about Schoenberg. Igor Stravinsky, Claude Debussy, Béla Bartók, and Richard Strauss exploited the new continent of dissonance opened by Schoenberg and found themselves embraced by audiences.

In the 1920s, Schoenberg constructed a compositional system to replace traditional key signatures with a series of twelve tones that defined and generated a musical piece. The tone row or series is no less arbitrary than traditional harmony, but it gave the composer's musical instincts a shield against the chaos implied by the fall of the old musical gods and a way of answering the critics who assailed him for his method even as they reviled his compositions.

To say that Schoenberg was a Moses, emancipating dissonance and leading music toward a land he would not enter might be neat, but it doesn't answer why *Moses und Aron*, written explicitly as an invitation to think, is such powerful music theater, against commercial pieties and all the other odds.

Schoenberg wrote the libretto of his 1932 biblical opera in three acts, but he only set the first two acts to music. In the following years, as prospects for its performance evaporated, the composer suggested that Act Three might be omitted or merely read aloud. Or, should resources preclude a full production, Schoenberg wryly suggested that the "Dance Around the Golden Calf" in Act Two might be performed as a stand-alone piece.

In any case, the prophet of serial composition and model for the protagonist of Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* died on Friday, July 13, 1951—at thirteen minutes before midnight—having never witnessed a staging of his masterpiece. Last Monday, February 8, after more than forty years of wandering, *Moses und Aron* entered the promised land: a premiere production at the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center. (Four more performances are scheduled, on February 17, 20, 23, and 26.)

It opened to a full house. No one left before the first act, and most of the audience stayed for the second. This was itself a wonder, since the New York public customarily walks out of a concert hall at the first strange sound, the exodus from dissonance. The orchestra, directed by James Levine, plays Schoenberg's score as music rather than as a lecture or demonstration. The huge chorus sustains the music and provides a context for the action. Moses, sung with clarity and conviction by British basso John Tomlinson in his Metropolitan debut, has a real beard. The spare, expressive stage set designed by Paul Brown uses only blue and orange-red to relieve its black and white, and a few shapes—wedge, wave, and bowl—to suggest Mount Horeb, the desert, the sky, Egypt, and Sinai. Costumes are modern street dress: black and white suits and dresses, shoes, plus some hats, and furs, and watches and jewels. In the tradition of Bertolt Brecht's Berlin theater, each scene is identified by a caption printed on a piece of scenery.

Act Two takes place in Moses' absence. After an orchestral interlude, Schoenberg's libretto calls for the overthrow of the elders of Israel, the exaltation of the Golden Calf on the altar, the sacrifice of herds of animals followed by a dance of the ritual slaughterers, a faith healing, suicides, renunciation,

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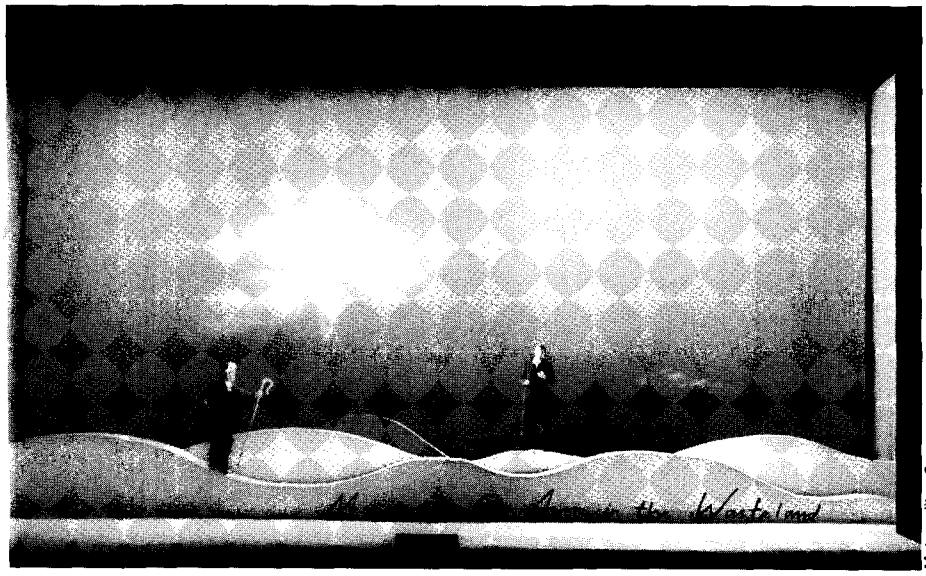
murder, orgies of drunkenness and dancing, the sacrifice of four naked virgins, then a general stripping to shouted slogans praising creative power, fertility, and desire.

The Met production took some liberties with the libretto. First, it updated the dancing. As choreographed by Ron Howell, the herds are gone; butchers and leaders of the tribes of Israel and their followers have become fashion models and bulb-popping photographers, businessmen and politicians, gangsters, and teenagers chewing gum. The people who followed their prophet into the wilderness in Act One, dressed like any prosperous crowd of upper-West Side Manhattanites, became overly specific, overly topical. I found myself remembering the musical toughs in *West Side Story* instead of hanging on the action. As the flashbulbs popped and cash was spread around, I wondered when they'd get to the naked virgins already, and would the Metropolitan Opera pull its punches?



Metropolitan Opera

Schoenberg, in a performance footnote, demanded nakedness "insofar as the law and the needs of the stage permit and demand." The Met's virgins did peel, down to their undies; as did all the other naked people called for in the stage directions. I'm not sure whose rules and needs were being heeded. No New York audience would have been shocked by total nudity, and maybe if naked had meant naked, the New Yorkers might have actually felt rebuked by Moses' descent from the mountain. Without that self-scrutiny, the dancing and cavorting before the Golden Calf—the entertainment for its own sake—proved thin gruel.

Act Two has much in common with cabaret or music hall. Besides strippers and naked dancers, it features stand-up comedians, tellers of quiet jokes. The renouncers give away what they don't have, or don't need, or don't want, in sacrifice to an inanimate object that can't use it anyway. The virgins give their passion; old people sacrifice the remainder of their lives; the poor donate their sad rags to the gods of self. Schoenberg's figurative witticisms are like the jokes in Freud's *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*: examples of behavior, pointed demonstrations or mild provocations to something other than laughter. In a peculiar variation on a song-and-patter routine (in this instance, an invention of the Met's), the compromised Elders of Israel drop their trousers and put shoes on their hands, so that they appear to dance, upside down, the old soft shoe.

More than the Elders get stood on their heads. It would be reasonable to expect that song and dance, orgy and riot, bloodshed and spectacle would be more of a show than the anguished and self-consuming philosophical and theological dialogue of two brothers, but they aren't. Schoenberg's representation of theology in word and music beggars everything else in the opera. In *Moses und Aron*, thought carries the day; high art and religion make livelier theater than do the staples of entertainment. On this stage, virtue plays better than sin.

Dissonance, for Schoenberg, meant more than music theory. It referred as well to the moral uncertainty that accompanies the discovery that the world is not adequately described in terms of the self. It is Moses' recognition that the Land of Milk and Honey doesn't exist except as a promise, and it is Aron's problem that when Israel hears the promise, they want it fulfilled. Made to wait, they seek refuge in the gods they know, gods like themselves. It is the uncomfortable intuition that people may choose freedom, but they desire bondage. Dissonance is embedded in the materials of language and art, because neither language nor art penetrates to reality, the thing-in-itself. Dissonance in Schoenberg's hands invokes a belief in meaning beyond the self, at the same time acknowledging it's just the self that knows.

Opera isn't usually an arena for hard thinking. It is typically loved for grand passions realized in gorgeous fantasy, for impossibilities enacted in librettoland. It is multimedia fairy-tale music videos for grown-ups. *Moses und Aron* offers a different kind of adult entertainment. It refutes the assertions that there's no such thing as art, that no thought is higher than another. One clear voice can carry over a chorus, and an evening of opera can stay in the head as something other than a melody and masquerade.

Schoenberg uses the imaginative freedom granted by the operatic suspension of disbelief if not to justify then at least to engage God's ways to man. His is the drama of monotheism, the song of the limited self in an infinite universe, of freedom and awe, bondage and security, the dance of the young who would be old and the old who would be young. *Moses und Aron* is stronger than pleasure. ♦

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THE NATION

"Increasingly Irrelevant for Over 130 Years"

MEMO
From: Victor Navasky
To: Katrina vanden Heuvel
Re: Next Year's Cruise

Katrina,

As we've discussed, the Sidney Blumenthal vs. Christopher Hitchens feud has wrecked our plans for the *Nation* magazine's annual cruise. Jimmy Carter's efforts to persuade the two to make up and share a stateroom have broken down. Blumenthal insisted they share any of the suite's dry-cleaning bills, and as you know Hitchens is ideologically opposed to laundry. Accordingly, I have gone back to research how our foremothers and forefathers in the workers' movement handled past feuds in making their leisure/fund-raising plans. It transpires that when Trotsky split with Lenin, the Bolsheviks reorganized their spring Volga River cruise, "Proletarian Paradise '23," by having the Leninists sleep in the staterooms and the Trotskyites sleep in the library. They even had a badminton tournament, which ironically enough was ultimately won by the Mensheviks. On the other hand, when the Lovestonites split with the Schachtmanites, they organized two separate cruises, one of which crossed the Bering Straits from right to left, and the other from left to right, each cursing the other as they passed.

Given the bad blood involved, and in order to maximize our profits, I have decided the *Nation* will sponsor two cruises this year, one for the Blumenthalians and the other for the Hitchensians. The Blumenthal cruise will be for leftists willing to betray their left-wing principles in order to be close to power. The Hitchens cruise will be for those willing to betray their friends for the sake of intellectual vanity and attention. This means we will have to divide up our speakers. Those who would sell their souls for power will go with Sidney. Those who would sell their souls for fame will go with Chris. It turns out that our contributors divide pretty easily into these two groups. So here is my suggested speakers' list for each cruise, with some possible topics.

The Power Cruise
(Blumenthal)

James Carville
"People Who Disagree With Me Suck"

Alexander Cockburn
"British Journalistic Ethics"

Susan Faludi
"Feminism? Never Mind"

Toni Morrison
"Bob Barr is White"

The Fame Cruise
(Hitchens)

Molly Ivins
"The Wit and Wisdom of Florence King"

Gore Vidal
"Hitchens's Jewish Ancestry"

Michael Moore
"Let's Talk About Me"

Alec Baldwin
"De Profundis"

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RETIREMENT SECURITY ISN'T A LOOPHOLE, IT'S OUR FUTURE.

The President says he'll balance his new budget by closing "loopholes" in tax law. Then he proposes raising 20% of that money by increasing taxes on the products that help American families plan for a secure retirement. But life insurance and annuities aren't loopholes. They are a vital part of securing your financial future.

It just doesn't make sense. One day the President wants Americans to take more responsibility for their retirement. The next, he wants to levy new taxes on annuities and life insurance. But any tax on policyholders – direct or indirect – undermines the goal of a secure retirement for all Americans. And we can't fix Social Security without a strong private retirement system.

Congress and the President should be helping Americans protect their families today and secure their retirement for tomorrow. That shouldn't be a taxing experience.

American Council of Life Insurance
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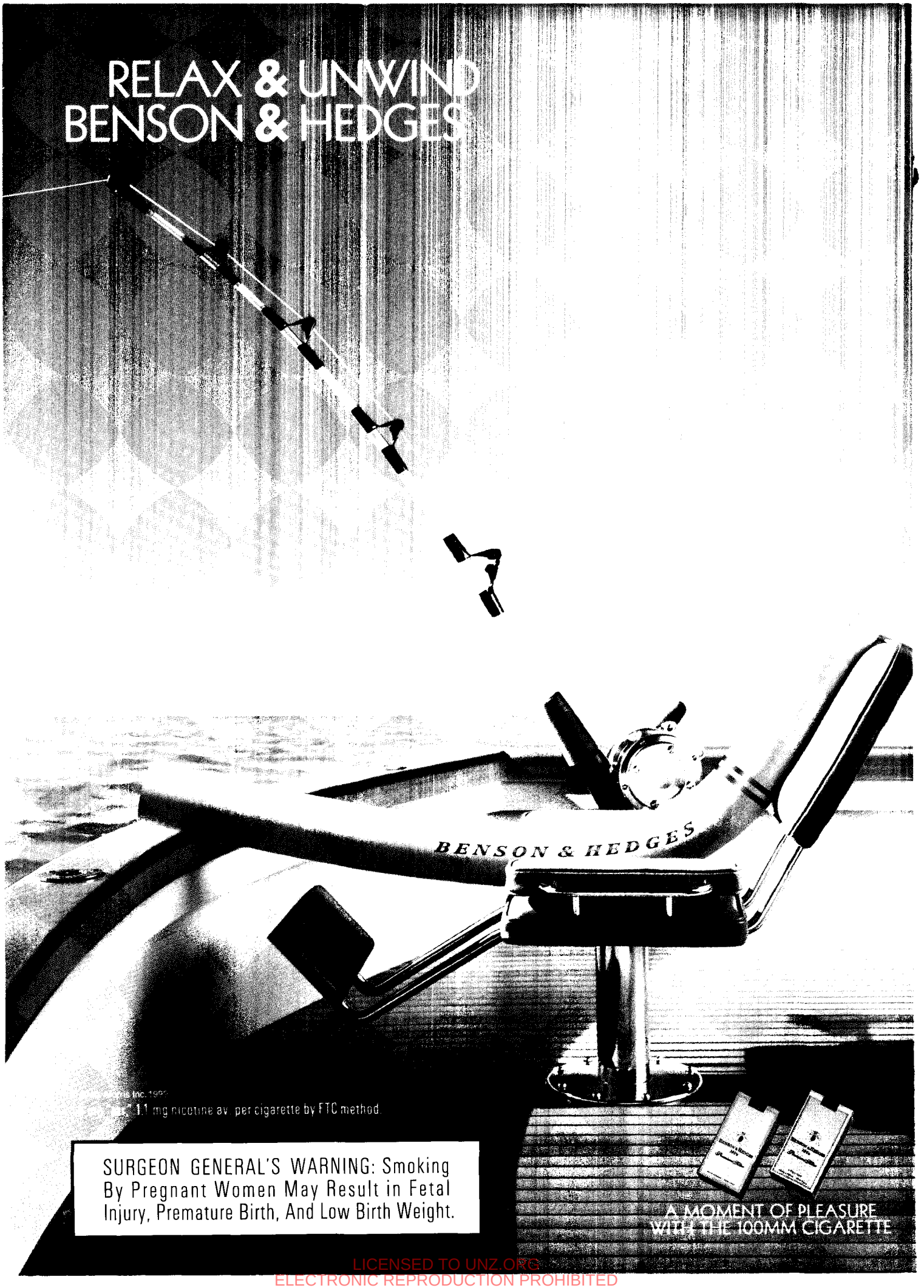

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